

J C Hutcheson

"Teddy"

Chapter One.

An Independent Young Gentleman.

"I want do d'an'ma!"

This sudden and unexpected exclamation, uttered as it was in a shrill little voice like that of a piping bullfinch, and coming from nowhere in particular, as far as he could make out, for he had fancied himself all alone on the platform, made the tall railway porter almost jump out of his skin, as he expressed it, startling him out of his seven senses.

He was a stalwart, good-natured, black-bearded giant of a man, clad in a suit of dunduckety-mud-coloured velveteens, rather the worse for wear, and smeary with oil and engine-grease, which gave them a sort of highly-burnished appearance resembling that of a newly-polished black-leaded stove.

Doing nothing, and thinking of nothing specially, for the three-forty up-train had gone through the station, and it was a good hour yet before the five-ten down express was due, he had been lazily leaning in a half-dreamy and almost dozing state against the side of the booking-office.

From this coign of vantage, he was, as well as his blinking eyes would allow, gazing out over the rails at the fast-falling flakes of feathery snow that were quickly covering up the metals and permanent way with a mantle of white; when, all at once, without a "by your leave," or seeing or hearing anyone approach, his attention was summarily brought back to the present by the strange announcement of the shrill little voice, while, at the same time, he felt the clutch of tiny fingers twitching at one of the legs of his shiny velveteen trousers, evidently as a further means of attracting his notice.

The touch made the porter look downwards, when, perceiving that his unknown interlocutor was a small mite barely reaching up to his knees, he became more reassured; and, bending his big body so as to bring his face somewhat on a level with the

young person, he proceeded to interrogate him in familiar fashion.

"Well, my little man," he said, desiring to learn how he might be of service, for he was a genial willing fellow, and always anxious to oblige people when he knew how—"what's the matter?"

"I want do d'an'ma!" repeated the small mite in the same piping tones as before, speaking with the utmost assurance and in the most matter-of-fact way.

It seemed as if, having now explicitly notified his wants and wishes, he confidently looked forward, in all the innocent trust of childhood, to their being instantly acted upon and carried out without any demur or hesitation.

Jupp, the porter, was quite flabbergasted by the little chap's sang-froid; so, in order the better to collect his ideas and enable him to judge what was best to be done under the circumstances, he took off his flat-peaked uniform cap with one hand and scratched his head reflectively with the fingers of the other, as is frequently the wont of those possessed of thick skulls and wits that are apt to go wool-gathering.

The operation appeared to have the effect desired; for, after indulging in this species of mental and physical cogitation for a moment or two, Jupp ventured upon asking the mite another question which had brilliantly suggested itself to him as opportune.

"Where is your grandma, sir?" he inquired with more deference than he had used before.

"Don-don," replied the small person nonchalantly, as if the point was quite immaterial, looking the porter calmly and straight in the eyes unflinchingly, without turning a hair as the saying goes.

Jupp had never come across such a self-possessed young mannikin in his life before. Why, he might have been the station-master or traffic-manager, he appeared so much at his ease!

But, he was a little gentleman all the same, Jupp could readily see, in spite of the fact that his costume was not quite suited for travelling, the mite being attired in a very prominent and dirty pinafore, while his chubby face was tear-stained, and he had the look of having come out in a hurry and being perhaps

unprepared for the journey he contemplated; although, mind you, he had his luggage with him all right—a small bundle tied up in a large pocket-handkerchief of a bright-red colour, which he held tightly clasped to his little stomach as if afraid of its being taken from him.

Jupp hardly knew off-hand how to deal with the case, it being of a more perplexing nature than had previously come within range of his own personal experience; still, he had his suspicions, and thought it best to entertain the young person in conversation for a bit, until he should be able to find out something about his belongings and where he came from.

"London's a large place, sir," he therefore observed tentatively, by way of drawing the mite out and getting some clue towards his identity.

The little chap, however, was quite equal to the occasion.

"Don't tare," he said defiantly, checking the porter's artful attempt at cross-examination. "I want do d'an'ma!"

Certainly, he was a most independent young gentleman.

Jupp was at a nonplus again; however, he tried to temporise with the mite, the more especially from his noticing that his little legs were quite mottled and his tiny fingers blue with cold.

"Well, come in here, sir, at all events, and warm yourself, and then we can talk the matter over comfortably together," he said, throwing open the door of the waiting-room as he spoke, and politely motioning the little chap to enter.

The mite made no reply to the invitation, but he tacitly accepted it by following the porter into the apartment he had indicated, and the two were presently seated before a glowing fire, on which Jupp immediately emptied the scuttleful of coals, there being no stint of the fuel by reason of the company standing all expense.

Thawed by the genial warmth, rendered all the more enjoyable by the wintry scene outside, where the snow was now swirling down faster and faster as the afternoon advanced, the little chap began to get more communicative, egged on by Jupp in a series of apparently innocent questions.

"Nussy bad ooman," he blurted out after a long silence, looking up at Jupp and putting his hand on his knee confidently.

"Indeed, sir?" said the other cautiously, leading him on.

"Ess, man," continued the mite. "See want take way my kitty."

"You don't mean that, sir!" exclaimed Jupp with well-feigned horror at such unprincipled behaviour on the part of the accused nurse.

"Ess, man, see did," replied the little chap, nodding his small curly head with great importance; but the next instant his little roguish blue eyes twinkled with suppressed intelligence, and his red rosebud of a mouth expanded into a happy smile as he added, with much satisfaction in his tones, "but I dot kitty all wite now!"

"Have you really, sir?" said Jupp, pretending to be much surprised at the information, the little chap evidently expecting him to be so.

"Ess, man," cried the mite with a triumphant shout; "I'se dot po' 'ittle kitty here!"

"Never, sir!" ejaculated Jupp with trembling eagerness, as if his life depended on the solution of the doubt.

The little chap became completely overcome with merriment at having so successfully concealed his treasured secret, as he thought, that the porter had not even guessed it.

"Kitty's in dundle!" he exclaimed gleefully, hugging his handkerchief parcel tighter to his little stomach as he spoke. "I dot kitty here, all wite!"

"You don't mean that, sir—not in that bundle o' yours surely, sir?" repeated Jupp with deep fictitious interest, appearing still not quite convinced on the point and as if wishing to have the difficulty cleared up.

This diplomatic course of procedure on the part of the porter removed any lingering scruples the mite had in respect of his good faith.

"Ess, man. I dot kitty here in dundle all wite," he repeated earnestly in his very impressive little way. "Oo musn't tell nobody and I'll so her to 'oo!"

"I won't breathe a word of it to a soul, sir," protested Jupp as solemnly and gravely as if he were making his last dying

deposition; whereupon the mite, quite convinced of the porter's trustworthiness and abandoning all further attempt at concealment, deposited his little bundle tenderly on the floor in front of the fireplace, and began to open it with much deliberation.

The little fellow appeared so very serious about the matter, that Jupp could not help trying to be serious too; but it required the exercise of all the self-command he possessed to refrain from laughing when the motley contents of the red handkerchief were disclosed.

Before the last knot of the bundle was untied by the mite's busy fingers there crawled out a tiny tortoise-shell kitten, with its diminutive little tail erect like a young bottle-brush, which gave vent to a "phiz-phit," as if indignant at its long confinement, and then proceeded to rub itself against Jupp's leg, with a purring mew on recognising a friend.

"So that's kitty," said Jupp, holding the little thing up on his knee and stroking it affectionately, the animal signifying its satisfaction by licking the back of his hand with its furry little red tongue, and straightening its tiny tail again as stiff as a small poker.

"Ess, man. Dat's kitty," murmured the mite, too much occupied undoing the last knots of the bundle to waste time in further speech for the moment, struggling as he was at the job with might and main.

In another second, however, he had accomplished his task; and, lifting up the corners of the red handkerchief, he rolled out the whole stock of his valued possessions on to the floor.

"Dere!" he exclaimed with much complacency, looking up into Jupp's face in expectation of his admiring surprise.

The porter was again forced to act a part, and pretend that he could not guess anything.

"Dear me!" he said; "you have brought a lot of things! Going to take 'em with you to London, sir?"

"Ess. Da'n'ma tate tare of zem."

"No doubt, sir," replied Jupp, who then went on to inspect gingerly the different articles of the collection, which was very varied in character.

They consisted, in addition to the tortoise-shell kitten fore-mentioned, of a musical snuff-box, a toy model of a ship, a small Noah's ark, a half-consumed slice of bread and butter, an apple with a good-sized bite taken out of one side, a thick lump of toffee, and a darkish-brown substance like gingerbread, which close association in the bundle, combined with pressure, had welded together in one almost indistinguishable mass.

"I suppose, sir," observed Jupp inquiringly, picking up all the eatables and putting them together apart on the seat next the little man—"I suppose as how them's your provisions for the journey?"

"Ess. I ate dindin; an', dat's tea."

"Indeed, sir! and very nice things for tea too," said Jupp, beaming with admiration and good-humoured fun.

"I toouldn't det any milk, or I'd bought dat too," continued the mite, explaining the absence of all liquid refreshment.

"Ah! that's a pity," rejoined the porter, thinking how well half a pint of milk would have mixed up with the other contents of the bundle; "but, perhaps, sir, the kitty would have lapped it up and there would have been none left. Would you like a cup of tea now, sir? I'm just agoing to have mine; and if you'd jine me, I'd feel that proud you wouldn't know me again!"

"Dank 'oo, I'm so dirsty," lisped the little man in affable acquiescence; and, the next moment, Jupp had spirited out a rough basket from under the seat in the corner, when extracting a tin can with a cork stopper therefrom, he put it on the fire to warm up.

From a brown-paper parcel he also turned out some thick slices of bread that quite put in the shade the half-eaten one belonging to the mite; and as soon as the tea began to simmer in the tin over the coals, he poured out some in a pannikin, and handed it to his small guest.

"Now, sir, we'll have a regular picnic," he said hospitably.

"All wite, dat's jolly!" shouted the other in great glee; and the two were enjoying themselves in the highest camaraderie, when, suddenly, the door of the waiting-room was opened from without, and the face of a buxom young woman peered in.

"My good gracious!" exclaimed the apparition, panting out the words as if suffering from short breath, or from the effects of more rapid exertion than her physique usually permitted. "If there isn't the young imp as comfortably as you please; and me a hunting and a wild-goose chasing on him all over the place! Master Teddy, Master Teddy, you'll be the death of me some day, that you will!"

Jupp jumped up at once, rightly imagining that this lady's unexpected appearance would, as he mentally expressed it, "put a stopper" on the mite's contemplated expedition, and so relieve him of any further personal anxiety on his behalf, he having been puzzling his brains vainly for the last half hour how to discover his whereabouts and get him home to his people again; but, as for the little man himself, he did not seem in the least put out by the interruption of his plans.

"Dat nussy," was all he said, clutching hold of Jupp's trouser leg, as at first, in an appealing way: "Don't 'et her, man, tate away poor kitty!"

"I won't sir, I promise you," whispered Jupp to comfort him; however, before he could say any more, the panting female had drawn nearer from the doorway and come up close to the fireplace, the flickering red light from which made her somewhat rubicund countenance appear all the ruddier.

Chapter Two.

Tells all about him.

"Pray, don't 'ee be angry wi' him, mum," said Jupp appealingly, as the somewhat flustered female advanced towards the mite, laying hands on his collar with apparently hostile intentions.

"I ain't a going to be angry," she replied a trifle crossly, as perhaps was excusable under the circumstances, carrying out the while, however, what had evidently been her original idea of giving the mite "a good shaking," and thereby causing his small person to oscillate violently to and fro as if he were crossing the Bay of Biscay in a Dutch trawler with a choppy sea running. "I ain't angry to speak of; but he's that tormenting sometimes as to drive a poor creature a'most out of her mind! Didn't I tell 'ee," she continued, turning round abruptly to the object of her wrath and administering an extra shake by way of calling him to

attention. "Didn't I tell 'ee as you weren't to go outdoors in all the slop and slush—didn't I tell 'ee now?"

But in answer the mite only harked back to his old refrain.

"I want do d'an'ma," he said with stolid defiance, unmoved alike by his shaking or the nurse's expostulation.

"There, that's jest it," cried she, addressing Jupp the porter again, seeing that he was a fine handsome fellow and well-proportioned out of the corner of her eye without looking at him directly, in that unconscious and highly diplomatic way in which women folk are able to reckon up each other on the sly and take mental stock of mankind. "Ain't he aggravating? It's all that granma of his that spoils him; and I wish she'd never come nigh the place! When Master Teddy doesn't see her he's as good as gold, that he is, the little man!"

She then, with the natural inconsequence and variability of her sex, immediately proceeded to hug and kiss the mite as affectionately as she had been shaking and vituperating him the moment before, he putting up with the new form of treatment as calmly and indifferently as he had received the previous scolding.

"He's a fine little chap," said Jupp affably, conceiving a better opinion of the nurse from her change of manner as well as from noticing, now that her temporary excitement had evaporated, that she was a young and comely woman with a very kindly face. "He told me as how he were going to Lun'non."

"Did he now?" she exclaimed admiringly.

"He's the most owdacious young gen'leman as ever was, I think; for he's capable, young as he is, not long turned four year old, of doin' a'most anything. Look now at all them things of his as he's brought from home!"

"That were his luggage like," observed Jupp, smiling and showing his white teeth, which contrasted well with his black beard, making him appear very nice-looking really, the nurse thought.

"The little rogue!" said she enthusiastically, hugging the mite again with such effusion that Jupp wished he could change places with him, he being unmarried and "an orphan man," as he described himself, "without chick or child to care for him."

"He ought to be a good 'un with you a looking after him," he remarked with a meaning glance, which, although the nurse noticed, she did not pretend to see.

"So he is—sometimes, eh, Master Teddy?" she said, bending down again over the mite to hide a sudden flush which had made her face somehow or other crimson again.

"Ess," replied the hero of the occasion, who, soothed by all these social amenities passing around him, quickly put aside his stolid demeanour and became his little prattling self again.

However, such was his deep foresight that he did not forget to grasp so favourable an opportunity for settling the initial difficulty between himself and nurse in the matter of the kitten, which had led up logically to all that had happened, and so prevent any misunderstanding on the point in future.

"Oo won't tate way kitty?" he asked pleadingly, holding up with both hands the struggling little animal, which Jupp had incontinently dropped from his knee when he rose up, on the door of the waiting-room being suddenly opened and the impromptu picnic organised by the mite and himself brought to an abrupt termination, by the unexpected advent of the nurse on the scene.

"No, Master Teddy, I promise you I won't," she replied emphatically. "You can bathe the poor little brute in the basin and then put it all wet in your bed afterwards, as you did this morning, or anything else you like. Bless you, you can eat it if it so please you, and I shan't interfere!"

"All wite, den; we frens 'dain," lisped the mite, putting up his little rosebud mouth so prettily for a kiss, in token of peace and forgiveness on his part, that the nurse could not help giving him another hug.

This display of affection had unfortunately the same effect on Jupp as before, causing the miserable porter to feel acute pangs of envy; although, by rights, he had no direct interest in the transaction, and was only an outside observer, so to speak!

By way of concealing his feelings, therefore, he turned the conversation.

"And have you come far arter him, miss, if I may make so bold as to ax the question?" he said hesitatingly, being somewhat puzzled in his mind as to whether "miss" or "mum" was the

correct form in which to address such a pleasant young woman, who might or might not be a matron for all he could tell.

He evidently hit upon the right thing this time; for, she answered him all the more pleasantly, with a bright smile on her face.

"Why, ever so far!" she exclaimed. "Don't you know that large red brick house t'other side of the village, where Mr Vernon lives—a sort of old-fashioned place, half covered with ivy, and with a big garden?"

"Parson Vernon's, eh?"

"Yes, Master Teddy's his little son."

"Lor', I thought he were a single man, lone and lorn like myself, and didn't have no children," said Jupp.

"That's all you know about it," retorted the nurse. "You must be a stranger in these parts; and, now I come to think on it, I don't believe as I ever saw you here before."

"No, miss, I was only shifted here last week from the Junction, and hardly knows nobody," said Jupp apologetically. "For the rights o' that, I ain't been long in the railway line at all, having sarved ten years o' my time aboard a man-o'-war, and left it thinking I'd like to see what a shore billet was like; and so I got made a porter, miss, my karacter being good on my discharge."

"Dear me, what a pity!" cried the nurse. "I do so love sailors."

"If you'll only say the word, miss, I'll go to sea again to-morrow then!" ejaculated Jupp eagerly.

"Oh no!" laughed the nurse; "why, then I shouldn't see any more of you; but I was telling you about Master Teddy. Parson Vernon, as you call him, has four children in all—three of them girls, and Master Teddy is the only boy and the youngest of the lot."

"And I s'pose he's pretty well sp'ilt?" suggested Jupp.

"You may well say that," replied the other. "He was his mother's pet, and she, poor lady, died last year of consumption, so he's been made all the more of since by his little sisters, and the grandmother when she comes down, as she did at Christmas. You'd hardly believe it, small as he looks he almost rules the

house; for his father never interferes, save some terrible row is up and he hears him crying—and he can make a noise when he likes, can Master Teddy!”

“Ess,” said the mite at this, thinking his testimony was appealed to, and nodding his head affirmatively.

“And he comed all that way from t’other side o’ the village by hisself?” asked Jupp by way of putting a stop to sundry other endearments the fascinating young woman was recklessly lavishing on the little chap. “Why, it’s more nor a mile!”

“Aye, that he has. Just look at him,” said she, giving the mite another shake, although this time it was of a different description to the one she had first administered.

He certainly was not much to look at in respect of stature, being barely three feet high; but he was a fine little fellow for all that, with good strong, sturdy limbs and a frank, fearless face, which his bright blue eyes and curling locks of brown hair ornamented to the best advantage.

As before mentioned, he had evidently not been prepared for a journey when he made his unexpected appearance at the station, being without a hat on his head and having a slightly soiled pinafore over his other garments; while his little feet were encased in thin house shoes, or slippers, that were ill adapted for walking through the mud and snow.

Now that the slight differences that had arisen between himself and the nurse had been amicably settled, he was in the best of spirits, with his little face puckered in smiles and his blue eyes twinkling with fun as he looked up at the two observing him.

“He is a jolly little chap!” exclaimed Jupp, bending down and lifting him up in his strong arms, the mite the while playfully pulling at his black beard; “and I tell you what, miss, I think he’s got a very good nurse to look after him!”

“Do you?” said she, adding a moment afterwards as she caught Jupp’s look of admiration, “Ah, that’s only what you say now. You didn’t think so when I first came in here after him; for you asked me not to beat him—as if I would!”

“Lor’, I never dreamt of such a thing!” cried he with much emphasis, the occasion seeming to require it. “I only said that to coax you like, miss. I didn’t think as you’d hurt a hair of his head.”

"Well, let it be then," replied she, accepting this amende and setting to work gathering together the mite's goods and chattels that were still lying on the floor of the waiting-room—with the exception of the kitten, which he had himself again assumed the proprietorship of and now held tightly in his arms, even as he was clasped by Jupp and elevated above the porter's shoulder. "I must see about taking him home again."

"Shall I carry him for you, miss?" asked Jupp. "The down-train ain't due for near an hour yet, and I dessay I can get my mate to look out for me while I walks with you up the village."

"You are very kind," said she; "but, I hardly like to trouble you?"

"No trouble at all, miss," replied Jupp heartily. "Why, the little gentleman's only a featherweight."

"That's because you're such a fine strong man. I find him heavy enough, I can tell you."

Jupp positively blushed at her implied compliment. "I ain't much to boast of ag'in a delicate young 'ooman as you," he said at last; "but, sartenly, I can carry a little shaver like this; and, besides, look how the snow's a coming down."

"Well, if you will be so good, I'd be obliged to you," interposed the nurse hurriedly as if to stop any further explanations on Jupp's part, he having impulsively stepped nearer to her at that moment.

"All right then!" cried he, his jolly face beaming with delight at the permission to escort her. "Here, Grigson!"

"That's me!" shouted another porter appearing mysteriously from the back of the office, in answer to Jupp's stentorian hail.

"Just look out for the down-train, 'case I ain't back in time. I'm just agoin' to take some luggage for this young woman up to the village."

"Aye, just so," replied the other with a sly wink, which, luckily for himself, perhaps, Jupp did not see, as, holding the mite tenderly in his arms, with his jacket thrown over him to protect him from the snow, he sallied out from the little wayside station in company with the nurse, the latter carrying all Master Teddy's valuables, which she had re-collected and tied up again

carefully within the folds of the red pocket-handkerchief bundle wherein their proprietor had originally brought them thither.

Strange to say, the mite did not exhibit the slightest reluctance in returning home, as might have been expected from the interruption of his projected plan of going to London to see his "d'an'ma."

On the contrary, his meeting with Jupp and introduction to him as a new and estimable acquaintance, as well as the settlement of all outstanding grievances between himself and his nurse, appeared to have quite changed his views as to his previously-cherished expedition; so that he was now as content and cheerful as possible, looking anything but like a disappointed truant.

Indeed, he more resembled a successful conqueror making a triumphal entry into his capital than a foiled strategist defeated in the very moment of victory!

"I like oo," he said, pulling at Jupp's black beard in high glee and chuckling out aloud in great delight as they proceeded towards the village, the nurse clinging to the porter's other and unoccupied arm to assist her progress through the snow-covered lane, down which the wind rushed every now and then in sudden scurrying gusts, whirling the white flakes round in the air and blinding the wayfarers as they plodded painfully along.

"I don't know what I should have done without your help," she observed fervently after a long silence between the two, only broken by Master Teddy's shouts of joy when a snow-flake penetrating beneath Jupp's jacket made the kitten sneeze. "I'm sure I should never have got home to master's with the boy!"

"Don't name it," whispered Jupp hoarsely beneath his beard, which the snow had grizzled, lending it a patriarchal air. "I'm only too proud, miss, to be here!" and he somehow or other managed to squeeze her arm closer against his side with his, making the nurse think how nice it was to be tall and strong and manly like the porter!

"They'll be in a rare state about Master Teddy at the vicarage!" she said after they had plodded on another hundred yards, making but slow headway against the drifting snow and boisterous wind. "I made him angry by taking away his kitten, I suppose, and so he determined to make off to his gran'ma; for we missed him soon after the children's dinner. I thought he was in the study with Mr Vernon; but when I came to look he

wasn't there, and so we all turned out to search for him. Master made sure we'd find him in the village; but I said I thought he'd gone to the station, far off though it was, and you see I was right!"

"You're a sensible young woman," said Jupp. "I'd have thought the same."

"Go on with your nonsense; get along!" cried she mockingly, in apparent disbelief of Jupp's encomiums, and pretending to wrench her arm out of his so as to give point to her words.

"I'll take my davy, then," he began earnestly; but, ere he could say any more, a voice called out in front of them, amid the eddying flakes:

"Hullo, Mary! Is that you?"

"That's my master," she whispered to Jupp; and then answered aloud, "Yes, sir, and I've found Master Teddy."

"Is Mary your name?" said Jupp to her softly in the interlude, while scrunching footsteps could be heard approaching them, although no one yet could be perceived through the rifts of snow. "I think it the prettiest girl's name in the world!"

"Go 'long!" cried she again; but she sidled up to him and held on to his arm once more as she spoke, the blasts of the storm at the moment being especially boisterous.

"Is that you, Mary?" repeated the voice in front, now much nearer, her answer not having been heard apparently, on account of the wind blowing from the speaker towards them.

"Yes, sir," she screamed out. "I've found Master Teddy, and he's all right."

She was heard this time.

"Thank God!" returned the voice in trembling accents, nearer still; and then a thin, haggard, careworn-looking man in clergyman's dress rushed up to them.

He was quite breathless, and his face pale with emotion.

"Padie! Padie!" exclaimed the mite, raising himself up on Jupp's shoulder and stretching out one of his little hands to the new-

comer while the other grasped the kitten. "I'se turn back, I'se turn back to oo!"

"My boy, my little lamb! God be praised for his mercy!" cried the other; and the next instant Teddy was locked in his father's arms in a close embrace, kitten and all.

"Say, Miss Mary," whispered Jupp, taking advantage of the opportunity while Mr Vernon's back was turned.

"What?" she asked, looking up into his face demurely.

"This ought to be passed round."

"Go 'long!" she replied; but, she didn't budge an inch when Jupp put his arm round her, and nobody knows what happened before Mr Vernon had composed himself and turned round again!

Chapter Three.

At the Vicarage.

Three little girls were flattening their respective little noses against the panes of glass as they stood by one of the low French windows of the old red brick house at the corner of the lane commanding the approach from the village; and three little pairs of eager eyes, now big with expectation, were peering anxiously across the snow-covered lawn through the gathering evening gloom towards the entrance gate beyond—the only gap in the thick and well-nigh impenetrable laurel hedge, some six feet high and evenly cropped all round at the top and square at the sides, which encircled the vicarage garden, shutting it in with a wall of greenery from the curious ken of all passers-by without.

With eager attention the little girls were watching to see who would be the first of the trio to herald the return of the missing Master Teddy and those who had gone forth in search of him; but, really, seekers and sought alike had been so long absent that it seemed as if they were all lost together and never coming back!

The little girls were weary almost of waiting, and being thus kept in suspense with hope deferred.

Besides that, they were overcome with a sense of loneliness and desertion, everyone in the house but old Molly the cook and themselves having started off early in the afternoon in different directions in quest of the truant Teddy; so, as the time flew by and day drew to a close, without a sight or sound in the distance to cheer their drooping spirits, their little hearts grew heavy within them.

Presently, too, their whilom bright eyes got so dimmed with unshed tears which would well up, that they were unable to see clearly had there been anything or anyone for them to see; while their little putty noses, when they removed them occasionally from close contact with the glass, bore a suspiciously red appearance that was not entirely due to previous pressure against the window panes.

Nor were their surroundings of a sufficiently enlivening character to banish the little maidens' despondency, the fire in the drawing-room grate having died out long since from inattention, making them feel cold and comfortless, and it had got so dark within that they could not distinguish the various articles of furniture, even papa's armchair in the chimney-corner; while, outside, in the gloaming, the snow-flakes were falling slowly and steadily from a leaden-hued sky overhead.

The only thing breaking the stillness of the murky air was the melancholy "Chirp, chirp! chirp, chirp" uttered at intervals by some belated sparrow who had not gone to bed in good time like all sensible bird-folk, and whose plaintive chirp was all the more aggravating from its monotonous repetition.

"I'm sore sumtin d'eadfill's happened," whimpered little Cissy, the youngest of the three watchers, after a long silence between them. "Pa sood have been back hours and hours and hours ago."

"Nonsense, Cissy!" said Miss Conny, her elder sister, who by virtue of her seniority and the fact of her having reached the mature age of ten was rather prone to giving herself certain matronly airs of superiority over the others, which they put up with in all good faith, albeit they were most amusing to outside onlookers. "You are always imagining something terrible is going to befall everybody, instead of hoping for the best! Why don't you learn to look on the bright side of things, child? Every cloud, you know, has its silver lining."

"But not dat one up dere!" retorted Cissy, unconvinced by the proverb, pointing to the sombre pall of vapour that now

enveloped the whole sky overhead; when, struck more than ever with the utter dismalness of the scene, she drew out a tiny sort of doll's handkerchief from as tiny a little pocket in her tiny pinafore-apron, and began wiping away the tears from her beady eyes and blowing her little red nose vigorously. "It's all black, and no light nowhere; and I'm sore poor pa and Teddy and all of dem are lost!"

With that, completely overcome by her own forebodings, the little thing all at once broke down, sobbing in such a heart-broken way that it was as much as Conny could do to comfort her; the elder sister drawing her to her side and hugging her affectionately, rocking her small person to and fro the while with a measured rhythm-like movement as if little Cissy were a baby and she her mother, hushing her to sleep!

At this moment, Liz, who occupied the middle step between the two, and was of a much more sedate and equable nature than either of her sisters, suddenly effected a diversion that did more to raise Cissy's spirits than all Conny's whispered consolation and kisses.

"I think I see a black speck moving in the lane," she exclaimed, removing her face a second from the glass to look round at the others as she spoke, and then hastily glueing it to the pane again. "Yes, somebody's coming. There's an arm waving about!"

Conny and Cissy were instantly on the alert; and before Liz had hardly got out the last words they had imitated her example, wedging their little noses once more against the window, looking down the lane, and trying somewhat vainly to pierce the haze obscuring the distance.

"No," said Conny, after a prolonged observation of the object Liz had pointed out; "it's only a branch of the lilac tree blown about by the wind."

A minute later, however, and Liz began to clap her hands triumphantly, although still keeping her face fixed to the window.

"I was right, I was right!" she exclaimed in triumph. "The speck is getting nearer, and, see, there are two more behind."

"I believe you are right," said Conny, after another steady glance down the lane. "There are three people approaching the house, and—"

"Dat's pa in front, I know," shouted out Cissy, interrupting her and clapping her hands like Liz, her whilom sad little face beaming with gladness. "I see him, I see him, and he's dot Teddy in his arms!"

"So he has," said Conny, carried away by the excitement out of her ordinarily staid and decorous demeanour. "Let us all run down and meet him!"

Her suggestion was hailed with a shout of exclamation; and, the next moment, forgetful of the falling flakes and the risk of getting damp feet, which Conny the careful was ever warning the others against, the three had run out into the hall, opened the outside door of the porch, which the wind banged against the side of the passage with a thump that shook the house, and were racing towards the entrance gate over the white expanse of lawn, now quite covered with some six inches of snow.

Just as the little girls reached the gate, all breathless in a batch, it was opened from without, and they were confronted by their father with Master Teddy on his shoulder, still holding the kitten in his arms; while, close behind, followed Jupp taking care of Mary the nurse.

"Oh, papa!" cried Conny, Cissy, and Liz in chorus, hanging on to their father's coat-tails as if afraid he would get away from them again; and so, in a motley procession, Teddy apparently king of the situation and Jupp and Mary still bringing up the rear, they marched into the hall, where Molly the cook, having heard the door bang when the little girls rushed out, was waiting with a light to receive them.

"Take the porter to the kitchen, Molly," said Mr Vernon, "and give him, mind, a good cup of tea for bringing home Master Teddy. But for his kindness we might not perhaps have seen the little truant again—to-night, at all events."

"Lawks a mercy, sir!" ejaculated Molly with open-mouth astonishment, curtsying and smiling: "you doant mean that?"

"Yes, I do," went on Mr Vernon. "Mind you take every care of him, for the porter is a right good fellow."

"Why, sir, I didn't do nothing to speak of, sir," said Jupp, quite abashed at being made so much of. "The young gen'leman commed to me, and in course, seeing as how he were such a little chap and all alone out in the cold, I couldn't do nothing else."

"Never mind that; I'm very much obliged to you, and so are all of us. What you've got to do now is to go with Molly and have a good cup of tea, the same as we are going to have after that long tramp in the snow," said the vicar cordially, shaking hands with Jupp; while Teddy, who was still perched on his father's shoulder, came out with a "tank oo, my dood man," which made everybody laugh.

Jupp hesitatingly attempted to decline the proffered hospitality, murmuring something about being wanted down at the station; but the vicar wouldn't hear of his refusal, the more especially as Mary reminded him that he had asked in her hearing his fellow-porter to look after his work in his absence.

So, presently, in heart nothing loth in spite of his excuses, he was following Molly the cook down the passage into her warm kitchen at the back of the house; while Mr Vernon, opening a door on the opposite side of the hall to the drawing-room, entered the parlour, where fortunately the fire, thanks to Molly's care, had not been allowed to go out, but was dancing merrily in the grate-lighting up the bright-red curtains that were closely drawn across the windows, shutting out the gloomy prospect outside, and throwing flickering shadows against the walls of the apartment as the jets of flame rose and fell.

Nurse Mary at first wanted to march off Master Teddy to bed, on the plea that he must be wet through and tired out with all the exposure he had undergone during his erratic escapade; but the young gentleman protesting indignantly against his removal whilst there was a chance of his sitting up with the rest, and his clothes having been found on examination to be quite dry on the removal of the porter's protecting jacket, he was allowed to remain, seated on the hearth-rug in state, and never once leaving hold of the tabby kitten that had indirectly led to his wandering away from home, with Conny and Liz and little Cissy grouped around him.

Here by the cosy fireside the reunited family had quite a festive little meal together, enlivened by the children's chatter, Miss Conny pouring out the tea with great dignity as her father said laughingly, and Teddy, unchecked by the presence of his nurse, who was too prone to calling him to account for sundry little breaches of etiquette for him to be comfortable when she was close by.

While the happy little party were so engaged, Jupp was being regaled sumptuously in the kitchen with both Molly the cook and

Mary to minister to his wants, the latter handmaiden having returned from the parlour after carrying in the tea-tray.

Jupp was in a state of supreme satisfaction ensconced between the two, munching away at the pile of nice hot buttered toast which the cook had expressly made for his delectation, and recounting between the mouthfuls wonderful yarns connected with his seafaring experiences for Mary's edification.

Joe the gardener, who had also come back to the house shortly after the others, with the report that he "couldn't see nothing of Master Teddy nowheres," sat in the chimney-corner, gazing at the porter with envious admiration as he told of his hairbreadth scapes at sea and ashore when serving in the navy. Joe wished that he had been a sailor too, as then perhaps, he thought, the nurse, for whom he had a sneaking sort of regard, might learn to smile and look upon him in the same admiring way, in which, as he could see with half an eye, she regarded the stalwart black-bearded Jupp.

Bye and bye, however, a tinkle of the parlour bell summoning the household to prayers brought the pleasant evening to a close, too soon so far as Jupp was concerned, although Joe the gardener did not regard the interruption with much regret; and while Mary took off the children to bed on the termination of the vicar's heart-felt thanks to the Father above for the preservation of his little son, Mr Vernon wished him good-night, trying to press at the same time a little money present into his hand for his kind care of Teddy.

But this Jupp would not take, declining the douceur with so much natural dignity that the vicar honoured him the more for refusing a reward, for only doing his duty as he said.

Mr Vernon apologised to him for having hurt his feelings by offering it, adding, much to Jupp's delight, that he would always be pleased to see him at the vicarage when he had an hour or so to spare if he liked to come; and, on the porter's telling him in return that he was only free as a rule on Sundays, as then only one train passed through the station early in the morning, between which and the mail express late at night he had nothing to do, and being a stranger in the place and without any relations the time somewhat hung on his hands, Mr Vernon asked him to come up to the house after church and have dinner with the servants, saying that he could go to the evening service in company with the family.

This invitation Jupp gladly accepted in the same spirit in which it was given; and then, with another hearty "good-night" from the vicar, to which he responded by touching his cap and giving a salute in regular blue-jacket fashion, he went on his way back to the little railway-station beyond the village where Master Teddy had first made his acquaintance—much to their mutual benefit as things now looked!

Chapter Four.

In a Scrape again.

The winter was a long and severe one, covering the range of downs that encircle Endleigh with a fleecy mantle of white which utterly eclipsed the colour of the woolly coats of the sheep for which they were famous, and heaping the valleys with huge drifts that defied locomotion; so that Master Teddy, being unable to get out of doors much, was prevented from wandering away from home again, had he been in that way inclined.

It may be added, too, that beyond breaking one of his arms in a tumble downstairs through riding on the banisters in defiance of all commands to the contrary, he managed for the next few months to keep pretty free from scrapes—something surprising in such a long interval.

During all this time Jupp had been a very regular Sunday visitor at the vicarage, coming up to the house after morning-service and being entertained at dinner in the kitchen, after which meal he served as a playfellow for the children until the evening, when he always accompanied the vicar to church.

He had now come to be looked upon by all as a tried and valued friend, Mr Vernon being almost as fond of chatting with him about his old sea life as was Mary, the nurse; while Conny would consult him earnestly on geographical questions illustrative of those parts of the globe he had visited.

As for the younger ones, he was their general factotum, Teddy and Cissy regarding him as a sort of good-natured giant who was their own especial property and servant.

With all a sailor's ingenuity, he could carve the most wonderful things out of the least promising and worthless materials that could be imagined; while, as for making fun out of nothing, or

telling thrilling stories of fairies and pirates and the different folk amongst whom he had mixed in his travels—some of them, to be sure, rather queer, as Conny said—why, he hadn't an equal, and could make the dreariest afternoon pass enjoyably to young and old alike, even Joe the gardener taking almost as great pleasure in his society as Molly and Mary.

This was while the snow lay on the ground and Jack Frost had bound the little river running through the village and the large pond in the water meadow beyond with chains of ice, and life out of doors seemed at a standstill; but, anon, when the breath of spring banished all the snow and ice, and cowslips and violets began to peep forth from the released hedgerows, and the sparrows chuckled instead of chirped, busying themselves nest-building in the ivy round the vicarage, and when the thrush sang to the accompaniment of the blackbird's whistle, the children found that Jupp was even a better playfellow in the open than he had been indoors, being nearly as much a child in heart as themselves.

Whenever he had half a day given him in the week free from duty he would make a point of coming up to take "Master Teddy and the young ladies" out into the woods, fern-hunting and flower-gathering, the vicar frequently popping upon the little picnickers unawares, whilst they were watching the rabbits and rabbitikins combing out their whiskers under the fir-trees, and Jupp and Mary getting an al fresco tea ready for the party.

The little tabby kitten had long since been eclipsed in Teddy's affections by a small Maltese terrier with a white curly coat of hair, which his fond grandmother had rather foolishly given him, the poor little animal being subjected to such rough treatment in the way of petting that it must have over and over again wished itself back in its Mediterranean home.

"Puck" was the little dog's name, and he appeared in a fair way of "putting a girdle round the earth," if not in forty minutes like his elfish namesake, at least in an appreciable limited space of time, Teddy never being content except he carried about the unfortunate brute with him everywhere he went, hugging it tightly in his arms and almost smothering its life out by way of showing his affection.

Having once had his hair cut, too, unluckily by Mary, Teddy seized an opportunity, when alone in the nursery, to treat poor Puck in similar fashion, the result of which was that the little animal, deprived of his long curly coat, not only shivered constantly with cold, but looked, in his closely-shorn condition,

like one of those toy lambs sold in the shops in lieu of dolls for children, which emit a bleating sort of sound when pressed down on their bellows-like stands.

Of course, Puck was as invariable an attendant at the picnic excursions in the woods as Master Teddy himself, and, having developed sufficient interest in the rabbits to summon up courage to run after them, which Teddy graciously permitted him to do, these outings perhaps gave the little animal the only pleasure he had in existence, save eating; for he was then allowed, for a brief spell at all events, to use his own legs instead of being carried about in baby fashion.

One day at the beginning of May, when the birds were gaily singing in the branches of the trees overhead, through which an occasional peep of blue sky could be had, the grass below being yellow with buttercups or patched in white with daisies, Jupp and Mary were grouped with the children beneath a spreading elm in the centre of a sort of fairy ring in the wood, a favourite halting-place with them all.

The porter for once in a way had a whole holiday, and had spent the morning helping Joe the gardener in mowing the lawn and putting out plants in the flower-beds in front of the vicarage; so after their early dinner, the children under Mary's care came out with him for a regular picnic tea in the woods, carrying a kettle with them to make a fire, with plenty of milk and cakes and bread and butter, for it was intended to have quite a feast in honour of "papa's birthday," the vicar having promised to come and join them as soon as he had finished his parish work.

The little ones had been romping with Jupp all the way to the wood under the downs, running races with him and making detours here and there in search of wild anemones and meadow-sweet, or else chasing butterflies and the low-flying swallows that heralded the advent of summer, so they were rather tired and glad to lie down on the grass and rest when they reached their old elm-tree; albeit, on Jupp setting to work to pick up sticks for the fire that was to boil the kettle, first one and then another jumped up to help, for, really, they could not be quiet very long.

The sticks being collected and Jupp having slung the camp-kettle over them by the means of two forked props, in campaigning fashion, as he well knew how to do as an old sailor, a match was quickly applied, and there was soon a pleasant crackling sound of burning wood, accompanied with

showers of sparks like fireworks as the wind blew the blaze aside.

Soon, too, a nice thick column of smoke arose that reminded Conny of what she had read of Indian encampments, although Jupp told her that if he were abroad and near any of such dark-skinned gentry he would take precious good care when making a fire to have as little smoke as possible.

"Why?" asked Conny, always anxious for information in order to improve her mind.

"Because I shouldn't like them to discover my whereabouts, unless, miss, I knew 'em to be friends," said Jupp in answer.

"And how would you manage to have no smoke?" she next pertinently inquired, like the sensible young lady she was.

"By always burning the very driest wood I could find, miss," replied Jupp. "It is only the green branches and such as has sap in it that makes the smoke."

"Oh!" ejaculated Conny, "I shall remember that. Thank you, Mr Jupp, for telling me. I often wondered how they contrived to conceal their camp-fires."

Teddy, with Cissy and Liz, had meanwhile been lying on the grass, overcome with their exertions in stick-gathering, and were intently watching a little glade in front of the elm-tree, some distance off under a coppice. Here they knew there were lots of rabbit-burrows, and they were waiting for some of the little animals to come out and perform their toilets, as they usually did in the afternoon and early evening, preparing themselves for bed-time, as the children said; but, for a long while, not one appeared in sight.

"Dere's a bunny at last," whispered Cissy as one peeped out from its hiding-place; and, seeing no cause for alarm in the presence of the little picnic party, with whom no doubt it was now well acquainted, it came further out from the coppice, sitting up on its haunches in the usual free-and-easy fashion of rabbitikins, and beginning to comb out its whiskers with its paws.

At the sight of this, Puck, who of course was cuddled up tightly in Teddy's arms, began to bark; but it was such a feeble little bark that not even the most timid of rabbits would have been frightened at it, while as for the one Puck wished to terrify, this

simply treated him with the utmost contempt, taking no notice either of bark or dog.

Three or four other rabbits, too, impressed with the beauty of the afternoon and the advantages of the situation, now followed their comrade's example, coming out from their burrows and squatting on the turf of the sloping glade in a semicircle opposite the children; while, the more poor Puck tried to express his indignation at their free-and-easiness, the more nonchalantly they regarded him, sitting up comfortably and combing away, enjoying themselves as thoroughly as if there was no such thing as a dog in existence, Puck's faint coughing bark being utterly thrown away upon them.

"Imp'dent tings!" said Teddy, unloosing the small terrier; "do and lick 'em, Puck!"

The little woolly lamb-like dog, who certainly possessed a larger amount of courage than would reasonably have been imagined from his attenuated appearance, at once darted after the rabbits, who, jerking their short tails in the funniest way possible and throwing up their hind-legs as if they were going to turn somersaults and come down on the other side, darted off down the glade, making for the holes of their burrows under the coppice.

The artful Puck, however, having chased the gentry before, was up to all their little dodges, so, instead of running for the rabbits directly, he attacked their flank, endeavouring to cut off their retreat; and, in this object succeeding, away went the hunted animals, now scared out of their lives, down the side of the hill to the bottom, with Puck charging after them, and Teddy following close behind, and Cissy and Liz bringing up the rear.

Miss Conny was much too dignified to chase rabbits.

"Stop, Master Teddy! stop!" cried Mary. "Come back, Miss Liz and Cissy—come back at once!"

The little girls immediately obeyed their nurse; but Teddy, who perhaps in the ardour of the chase might not have heard her call, continued on racing down the hill after Puck, as fast as his stumpy little legs could carry him, his hat flying off and his pinafore streaming behind him in the wind.

"Stop, Master Teddy, stop!" called out Mary again.

"Why can't you let him be?" said Jupp. "He's only enj'ying hisself with the rabbits, and can't come to no harm on the grass."

"Little you know about it," retorted Mary, rather crossly it seemed to Jupp. "Why, the river runs round just below the coppice; and if Master Teddy runs on and can't stop himself, he'll fall into it—there!"

"My stars and stripes!" ejaculated Jupp starting up in alarm. "I'll go after him at once."

"You'd better," said Mary as he set off running down the hill after Teddy, singing out loudly for him to stop in a sort of reef-topsails-in-a-heavy-squall voice that you could have heard more than a cable's length ahead!

The momentum Teddy had gained, however, from the descent of the glade prevented him from arresting his rapid footsteps, although he heard Jupp's voice, the slope inclining the more abruptly towards the bottom of the hill. Besides, Puck in pursuit of the rabbits was right in front of him, and the dog, unable or unwilling to stop, bounded on into the mass of rushes, now quite close, that filled the lower part of the valley, and disappeared from Teddy's sight.

The next moment there was a wild yelp from Puck as he gripped the rabbit, and both tumbled over the bank of the river into the water, which was previously concealed from view; the dog's bark being echoed immediately afterwards by a cry of alarm from Teddy and a heavy plunge, as he, too, fell into the swiftly-flowing stream, and was borne out from the bank by the rapid current away towards the mill-dam below!

Chapter Five.

Blown Up.

"Well, I never!" panted out Jupp as he raced down the incline at a headlong speed towards the spot where he had seen Teddy disappear, and whence had come his choking cry of alarm and the splash he made as he fell into the water. "The b'y'll be drowned 'fore I can reach him!"

But, such was his haste, that, at the same instant in which he uttered these words—more to himself than for anyone else's benefit, although he spoke aloud—the osiers at the foot of the slope parted on either side before the impetuous rush of his body, giving him a momentary glimpse of the river, with Teddy's clutching fingers appearing just above the surface and vainly appealing for help as he was sinking for the second time; so, without pausing, the velocity he had gained in his run down the declivity carrying him on almost in spite of himself, Jupp took a magnificent header off the bank. Then,—rising after his plunge, with a couple of powerful strokes he reached the unconscious boy, whose struggles had now ceased from exhaustion, and, gripping fast hold of one of his little arms, he towed him ashore.

Another second and Jupp would have been too late, Teddy's nearly lifeless little form having already been caught in the whirling eddy of the mill-race. Even as it was, the force of the on-sweeping current was so great that it taxed all Jupp's powers to the utmost to withstand being carried over the weir as he made for the side slanting-wise, so as not to weary himself out uselessly by trying to fight against the full strength of the stream, which, swollen with the rains of April, was resistless in its flow and volume.

Swimming on his side, however, and striking out grandly, Jupp succeeded at length in vanquishing the current, or rather made it serve his purpose; and, presently, grasping hold of the branch of an alder that hung over the river at the point of the bend, he drew himself up on the bank with one hand, holding poor Teddy still with the other, to find himself at the same moment confronted by Nurse Mary, with Cissy and Liz, who had all hurried down the slope to the scene of the disaster.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!—he's dead, he's dead!" wailed Mary, taking the little fellow from Jupp and lifting him up in her arms, preparing to start off at a run for the vicarage, while the little girls burst into a torrent of tears.

"You just bide there!" said Jupp, preventing her from moving, and looking like a giant Triton, all dripping with water, as he stepped forward. "You just bide there!"

"But he'll die if something's not done at once to restore him," expostulated Mary, vainly trying to get away from the other's restraining hold.

"So he might, if you took him all that long way 'fore doin' anything," replied Jupp grimly. "You gie him to me; I knows what's best to be done. I've seed chaps drownded afore aboard ship, and brought to life ag'in by using the proper methods to git back the circularation, as our doctor in the *Neptune* used to call it. You gie him to me!"

Impressed with his words, and knowing besides now from long acquaintance that Jupp was what she called "a knowledgeable man," Mary accordingly surrendered the apparently lifeless body of little Teddy; whereupon the porter incontinently began to strip off all the boy's clothing, which of course was wringing wet like his own.

"Have you got such a thing as a dry piece of flannel now, miss?" he then asked Mary, hesitating somewhat to put his request into words, "like, like—"

"You mean a flannel petticoat," said the girl promptly without the least embarrassment in the exigencies of the case. "Just turn your back, please, Mr Jupp, and I'll take mine off and give it to you."

No sooner was this said than it was done; when, Teddy's little naked body being wrapped up warmly in the garment Mary had surrendered, and turned over on the right side, she began under Jupp's directions to rub his limbs, while the other alternately raised and depressed the child's arms, and thus exercising—a regular expansion and depression of his chest.

After about five minutes of this work a quantity of water that he had swallowed was brought up by the little fellow; and next, Mary could feel a slight pulsation of his heart.

"He's coming round! he's coming round!" she cried out joyously, causing little Cissy's tears to cease flowing and Liz to join Mary in rubbing Teddy's feet. "Go on, Mr Jupp, go on; and we'll soon bring him to."

"So we will," echoed her fellow-worker heartily, redoubling his exertions to promote the circulation; and, in another minute a faint flush was observable in Teddy's face, while his chest rose and fell with a rhythmical motion, showing that the lungs were now inflated again and in working order.

The little fellow had been brought back to life from the very gates of death!

"Hooray!" shouted Jupp when Teddy at length opened his eyes, staring wonderingly at those bending over him, and drawing away his foot from Liz as if she tickled him, whereat Mary burst into a fit of violent hysterical laughter, which terminated in that "good cry" customary with her sex when carried away by excess of emotion.

Then, all at once, Teddy appeared to recollect what had happened; for the look of bewilderment vanished from his eyes and he opened his mouth to speak in that quaint, formal way of his which Jupp said always reminded him of a judge on the bench when he was had up before the court once at Portsmouth for smuggling tobacco from a troopship when paid off!

"Were's Puck an' de bunny?" he asked, as if what had occurred had been merely an interlude and he was only anxious about the result of the rabbit hunt that had so unwittingly led to his unexpected immersion and narrow escape from drowning.

No one in the greater imminence of Teddy's peril had previously thought of the dog or rabbit; but now, on a search being made, Puck was discovered shivering by the side of the river, having managed to crawl out somehow or other. As for the rabbit, which was only a young one or the little woolly terrier could never have overtaken it in the chase down the glade, no trace could be seen of it; and, consequently, it must have been carried over the weir, where at the bottom of the river it was now safe enough from all pursuit of either Puck or his master, and free from all the cares of rabbit life and those ills that even harmless bunnies have to bear!

When this point was satisfactorily settled, much to the dissatisfaction, however, of Master Teddy, a sudden thought struck Mary.

"Why, wherever can Miss Conny be all this time?" she exclaimed, on looking round and not finding her with the other children.

"See's done home," said Cissy laconically.

"Gone home!" repeated Mary. "Why?"

"Done fets dwy c'o's for Teddy," lisped the little girl, who seemed to have been well informed beforehand as to her sister's movements, although she herself had hurried down with the nurse to the river bank in company with the others immediately Jupp had rushed to Teddy's rescue.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mary, laughing again as she turned to Jupp. "Who would have thought the little puss would have been so thoughtful? But she has always been a funny child, older than her years, and almost like an old woman in her ways."

"Bless you, she ain't none the worse for that!" observed Jupp in answer. "She's a real good un, to think her little brother 'ud want dry things arter his souse in the water, and to go and fetch 'em too without being told."

"I expect you'd be none the worse either for going back and changing your clothes," said Mary, eyeing his wet garments.

"Lor', it don't matter a bit about me," he replied, giving himself a good shake like a Newfoundland dog, and scattering the drops about, which pleased the children mightily, as he did it in such a funny way. "I rayther likes it nor not."

"But you might catch cold," suggested Mary kindly.

"Catch your grandmother!" he retorted. "Sailors ain't mollycoddles."

"Wat's dat?" asked Teddy inquiringly, looking up at him.

"Why, sir," said Jupp, scratching his head reflectively—he had left his cap under the elm-tree on top of the hill, where he had taken it off when he set about building the fire for the kettle—"a mollycoddle is a sort of chap as always wraps hisself up keerfully for fear the wind should blow upon him and hurt his complexion."

"Oh!" said Teddy; but he did not seem any the wiser, and was about to ask another question which might have puzzled Jupp, when Liz interrupted the conversation, and changed the subject.

"There's Conny coming now, and Pa with her," she called out, pointing to the top of the glade, where her father and elder sister could be seen hurrying swiftly towards them, followed closely by Joe the gardener bearing a big bundle of blankets and other things which the vicar thought might be useful.

"My! Master must have been scared!" cried Mary, noticing in the distance the anxious father's face. "Master Teddy do cause him trouble enough, he's that fond of the boy!"

But, before Jupp could say anything in reply, the new arrivals had approached the scene of action, Conny springing forward first of all and hugging Teddy and Cissy and Liz all round. In the exuberance of her delight, too, at their being safe and sound, when in her nervous dread she had feared the worst, she extended the same greeting to Mary and Jupp; for, she was an affectionate little thing, and highly emotional in spite of her usually staid demeanour and retiring nature.

The vicar, too, could hardly contain himself for joy, and broke down utterly when he tried to thank Jupp for rescuing his little son; while Joe the gardener, not to be behindhand in this general expression of good-will and gratitude, squeezed his quondam rival's fist in his, ejaculating over and over again, with a broad grin on his bucolic face, "You be's a proper sort, you be, hey, Meaister?" thereby calling upon the vicar, as it were, to testify to the truth of the encomium.

He was a very funny man, Joe!

When the general excitement had subsided, and Teddy, who had in the meantime been stalking about, a comical little figure, attired in Mary's flannel petticoat, was re-dressed in the fresh suit of clothes Joe had brought for him amidst the blankets, the whole party adjourned up the hill to their old rendezvous under the elm-tree.

Here they found, greatly to their surprise and gratification, that Jupp's well-built fire had not gone out, as all expected, during the unforeseen digression that had occurred to break the even tenor of their afternoon's entertainment, although left so long unattended to.

On the contrary, it was blazing away at a fine rate, with the kettle slung on the forked sticks above it singing and sputtering, emitting clouds of steam the while, "like an engine blowing off," as the porter observed; so, all their preparations having been already completed, the children carried out their original intention of having a festal tea in honour of "Pa's birthday," he being set in their midst and told to do nothing, being the guest of the occasion.

Never did bread and butter taste more appetisingly to the little ones than when thus eaten out in the woods, away from all such stuck-up surroundings as tables and chairs, and plates, and cups and saucers, and the other absurd conventionalities of everyday life. They only had three little tin pannikins for their tea, which they passed round in turn, and a basket for their

dish, using a leaf when the luxury of a plate was desired by any sybarite of the party—those nice broad ones of the dock making splendid platters.

Now, besides bread and butter, Molly the cook had compounded a delicious dough-cake for them, having plums set in it at signal distances apart, so conspicuous that any one could know they were there without going to the trouble of counting them, which indeed would not have taken long to do, their number being rather limited; and, what with the revulsion of feeling at Teddy's providential escape, and the fact of having papa with them, and all, they were in the very seventh heaven of enjoyment.

Conny and Cissy, who were the most active of the sprites, assisted by the more deliberate Teddy and Liz, acted as "the grown-up people" attending as hostesses and host to the requirements of "the children," as they called their father and Mary and Jupp, not omitting Joe the gardener, who, squatting down on the extreme circumference of their little circle, kept up a perpetual grin over the acres of bread and butter he consumed, just as if he were having a real meal and not merely playing!

The worthy gardener was certainly the skeleton, or cormorant, so to speak, of the banquet, eating them almost out of house and home, it must be mentioned in all due confidence; and, taking watch of his depravity of behaviour in this respect, the thoughtful Conny registered an inward determination never to invite Joe to another of their *al fresco* feasts, if she could possibly avoid doing so without seriously wounding his sensibilities. The way he walked into that dough-cake would have made anyone almost cry.

The fête, however, excepting this drawback, passed off successfully enough without any other contretemps; and after the last crumb of cake had been eaten by Joe, and the things packed up, the little party wended their way home happily in the mellow May evening, through the fields green with the sprouting corn, with the swallows skimming round them and the lark high in the sky above singing her lullaby song for the night and flopping down to her nest.

Towards the end of the month, however, Teddy managed somehow or other to get into another scrape.

"There never was such a boy," as Mary said. He was "always in hot water."

The queen's birthday coming round soon after the vicar's, Jupp, remembering how it used to be kept up when he was in the navy, great guns banging away at royal salutes while the small-arm men on board fired a *feu de joie*, or "fire of joy," as he translated it by the aid of Miss Conny, who happened just then to be studying French, he determined to celebrate the anniversary as a loyal subject in similar fashion at the vicarage, with the aid of a couple of toy cannon and a small bag of powder which he purchased for the purpose.

Teddy, of course, was taken into his confidence, the artillery experiments being planned for his especial delectation; so, coming up to the house just about noon on the day of the royal anniversary, when he was able to get away from the station for an hour, leaving his mate Grigson in charge, he set about loading the ordnance and getting ready for the salute, with a train laid over the touch-holes of the cannon to set light to the moment it was twelve o'clock, according to the established etiquette in the navy, a box of matches being placed handy for the purpose.

As ill luck would have it, though, some few minutes before the proper time, Mary, who was trying to sling a clothes-line in the back garden, called Jupp to her assistance, and he being her attentive squire on all occasions, and an assiduous cavalier of dames, hastened to help her, leaving Teddy in charge of the loaded cannon, the gunpowder train, and lastly, though by no means least, the box of matches.

The result can readily be foreseen.

Hardly had Jupp reached Mary's side and proceeded to hoist the obstreperous clothes-line, when "Bang! bang!" came the reports of distant cannonading on the front lawn, followed by an appalling yell from the little girls, who from the safe point of vantage of the drawing-room windows were looking on at the preparations of war.

To rush back through the side gate round to the front was but the work of an instant with Jupp, and, followed by Mary, he was almost as quickly on the spot as the sound of the explosion had been heard.

He thought that Master Teddy had only prematurely discharged the cannon, and that was all; but when he reached the lawn what was his consternation to observe a thick black cloud of smoke hanging in the air, much greater than could possibly have been produced by the little toy cannon being fired off,

while Teddy, the cause of all the mischief, was nowhere to be seen at all!

Chapter Six.

The Pond in the Meadow.

Not a trace of the boy could be seen anywhere.

The cause of the explosion was apparent enough; for, the little wooden box on which Jupp had mounted the toy cannons, lashing them down firmly, and securing them with breechings in sailor-fashion, to prevent their kicking when fired, had been overturned, and a jug that he had brought out from the house containing water to damp the fuse with, was smashed to atoms, while of the box of matches and the bag of powder only a few smouldering fragments remained—a round hole burned in the grass near telling, if further proof were needed, that in his eagerness to start the salute, Master Teddy, impatient as usual, had struck a light to ignite the train, and this, accidentally communicating with the bag of powder, had resulted in a grand flare-up of the whole contents.

This could be readily reasoned out at a glance; but, where could Teddy be, the striker of the match, the inceptor of all the mischief?

Jupp could not imagine; hunt high, hunt low, as he might and did.

At first, he thought that the young iconoclast, as nothing could be perceived of him on the lawn or flower-beds, had been blown up in the air over the laurel hedge and into the lane; as, however, nothing could be discovered of him here, either, after the most careful search, this theory had to be abandoned, and Jupp was fairly puzzled.

Teddy had completely vanished!

It was very strange, for his sisters had seen him on the spot the moment before the explosion.

Mary, of course, had followed Jupp round to the front of the house, while the little girls came out on to the lawn; and Molly the cook, as well as Joe the gardener, attracted by the

commotion, had also been assisting in the quest for the missing Teddy, prying into every hole and corner.

But all their exertions were in vain; and there they stood in wondering astonishment.

"P'aps," suggested Cissy, "he's done upstairs?"

"Nonsense, child!" said Conny decisively; "we would have seen him from the window if he had come in."

"Still, we'd better look, miss," observed Mary, who was all pale and trembling with anxiety as to the safety of her special charge. "He may have been frightened and rushed to the nursery to hide himself, as he has done before when he has been up to something!"

So saying, she hurried into the passage, and the rest after her.

It was of no use looking into the drawing-room or kitchen, the little girls having been in the former apartment all the time, and Molly in the latter; but the parlour was investigated unsuccessfully, and every nook and cranny of the study, a favourite play-ground of the children when the vicar was out, as he happened to be this evening, fortunately or unfortunately as the case might be, visiting the poor of his parish.

Still, there was not a trace of Teddy to be found.

The search was then continued upstairs amongst the bed-rooms by Mary and Molly, accompanied by the three little girls, who marched behind their elders in silent awe, Jupp and Joe remaining down in the hall and listening breathlessly for some announcement to come presently from above.

The nursery disclosed nothing, neither did the children's sleeping room, nor the vicar's chamber, although the beds were turned up and turned down and looked under, and every cupboard and closet inspected as cautiously as if burglars were about the premises; and Mary was about to give up the pursuit as hopeless, when all at once, she thought she heard the sound of a stifled sob proceeding from a large oak wardrobe in the corner of the spare bed-room opposite the nursery, which had been left to the last, and where the searchers were all now assembled.

"Listen!" she exclaimed in a whisper, holding up her finger to enjoin attention; whereupon Cissy and Liz stopped shuffling

their feet about, and a silence ensued in which a pin might have been heard to drop.

Then, the noise of the stifled sobs that had at first attracted Mary's notice grew louder, and all could hear Teddy's voice between the sobs, muttering or repeating something at intervals to himself.

"I do believe he's saying his prayers!" said Mary, approaching the wardrobe more closely with stealthy steps, so as not to alarm the little stowaway, a smile of satisfaction at having at last found him crossing her face, mingled with an expression of amazement—"Just hear what he is repeating. Hush!"

They all listened; and this was what they heard proceeding from within the wardrobe, a sob coming in as a sort of hyphen between each word of the little fellow's prayer.

"Dod—bess pa—an' Conny an' Liz—an' 'ittle Ciss—an' Jupp, de porter man, an' Mary—an'—an'—all de oders—an' make me dood boy—an' I'll neber do it again, amen!"

"The little darling!" cried Mary, opening the door of the wardrobe when Teddy had got so far, and was just beginning all over again; but the moment she saw within, she started back with a scream which at once brought Jupp upstairs. Joe the gardener still stopped, however, on the mat below in the passage, as nothing short of a peremptory command from the vicar would have constrained him to put his heavy clod-hopping boots on the soft stair-carpet. Indeed, it had needed all Mary's persuasion to make him come into the hall, which he did as gingerly as a cat treading on a hot griddle!

As Jupp could see for himself, when he came up to the group assembled round the open door of the wardrobe there was nothing in the appearance of poor Teddy to frighten Mary, although much to bespeak her pity and sympathy—the little fellow as he knelt down in the corner showing an upturned face that had been blistered by the gunpowder as it exploded, besides being swollen to more than twice its ordinary size. His clothing was also singed and blackened like that of any sweep, while his eyelashes, eyebrows, and front hair had all been burnt off, leaving him as bare as a coot.

Altogether, Master Teddy presented a very sorry spectacle; and the little girls all burst into tears as they looked at him, even Jupp passing his coat-sleeve over his eyes, and muttering

something about its being "a bad job" in a very choky sort of voice.

It was but the work of an instant, however, for Mary to take up the unfortunate sufferer in her arms, and there he sobbed out all his woes as she cried over him on her way to the nursery, sending off Jupp promptly for the doctor.

"I'se not do nuzzin," explained Teddy as he was being undressed, and his burns dressed with oil and cotton-wool, pending the arrival of medical advice. "I'se only zust light de match an' den dere was a whiz; an' a great big black ting lift me up an' trow me down, and den I climb up out of de smoke an' run 'way here. I was 'fraid of black ting comin' an' hide!"

"There was no black thing after you, child," said Conny. "It was only the force of the explosion that knocked you down, and the cloud of smoke you saw, which hid you from us when you ran indoors."

"It was a black ting," repeated Teddy, unconvinced by the wise Miss Conny's reasoning. "I see him, a big black giant, same as de jinny in story of de fairies; but I ran 'way quick!"

"All right, dear! never mind what it was now," said Mary soothingly. "Do you feel any better now?"

"Poor mou's so sore," he whimpered, "an' 'ittle nosey can't breez!"

"Well, you shouldn't go meddling with matches and fire, as I've told you often," said Mary, pointing her moral rather inopportunistically. Still she patted and consoled the little chap as much as she could; and when Doctor Jolly came up from Endleigh presently, he said that she had done everything that was proper for the patient, only suggesting that his face might be covered during the night with a piece of soft rag dipped in Goulard water, so as to ease the pain of the brows and let the little sufferer sleep.

The vicar did not return home until some time after the doctor had left the house and Jupp gone back to his duties at the railway-station; but although all traces of the explosion had been removed from the lawn and the grass smoothed over by Joe the gardener, he knew before being told that something had happened from the unusual stillness around, both without and within doors, the little girls being as quiet as mice, and Teddy,

the general purveyor of news and noise, being not to the fore as usual.

It was not long before he found out all about the accident; when there was a grand to-do, as may be expected, Mr Vernon expressing himself very strongly anent the fact of Jupp putting such a dangerous thing as gunpowder within reach of the young scapegrace, and scolding Mary for not looking after her charge better.

Jupp, too, got another "blowing up" from the station-master for being behind time. So, what with the general upset, and the dilapidated appearance of Master Teddy, with his face like a boiled vegetable marrow, when the bandages had been removed from his head and he was allowed to get up and walk about again, the celebration of the Queen's Birthday was a black day for weeks afterwards in the chronicles of the vicar's household!

During the rest of the year, however, and indeed up to his eighth year, the course of Teddy's life was uneventful as far as any leading incident was concerned.

Of course, he got into various little scrapes, especially on those occasions when his grandmother paid her periodic visits to the vicarage, for the old lady spoiled him dreadfully, undoing in a fortnight all that Mary had effected by months of careful teaching and training in the way of obedience and manners; but, beyond these incidental episodes, he did not distinguish himself by doing anything out of the common.

Teddy leisurely pursued that uneven tenor of way customary to boys of his age, exhibiting a marked preference for play over lessons, and becoming a great adept at field sports through Jupp's kindly tuition, albeit poor Puck was no longer able to assist him in hunting rabbits, the little dog having become afflicted with chronic asthma ever since his immersion in the river when he himself had so narrowly escaped from drowning.

If water, though, had worked such ill to Puck, the example did not impress itself much on Teddy; for, despite his own previous peril, he was for ever getting himself into disgrace by going down to the river to catch sticklebacks against express injunctions to the contrary, when left alone for any length of time without an observant and controlling eye on his movements. He was also in the habit of joining the village boys at their aquatic pranks in the cattle-pond that occupied a prominent place in the meadows below Endleigh—just where

the spur of one of the downs sloped before preparing for another rise, forming a hollow between the hills.

Here Master Teddy had loved to go on the sly, taking off his shoes and stockings and paddling about as the shoe and stockingless village urchins did; and this summer, not satisfied with simple paddling as of yore, he bethought himself of a great enterprise.

The pond was of considerable extent, and when it was swollen with rain, as happened at this period, the month of June being more plentiful than usual of moisture, its surface covered several acres, the water being very deep between its edge and the middle, where it shallowed again, the ground rising there and forming a sort of island that had actually an alder-tree growing on it.

Now, Teddy's ambition was to explore this island, a thing none of the village boys had dreamed of, all being unable to swim; so, as the wished-for oasis could not be reached in that fashion, the next best thing to do was to build a boat like Robinson Crusoe and so get at it in that way.

As a preliminary, Teddy sounded the ex-sailor as to the best way of building a boat, without raising Jupp's suspicions—for, the worthy porter, awed by the vicar's reprimand anent the *feu de joie* affair and Mary's continual exhortations, had of late exhibited a marked disinclination to assist him in doing anything which might lead him into mischief—artfully asking him what he would do if he could find no tree near at hand large enough that he could hollow out for the purpose; but, Jupp could give him no information beyond the fact that he must have a good sound piece of timber for the keel, and other pieces curved in a particular fashion for the strakes, and the outside planking would depend a good deal whether he wanted the boat clinker-built or smooth-sided.

"But how then," asked Teddy—he could speak more plainly now than as a five-year old—"do people get off from ships when they have no boat?"

"Why, they builds a raft, sir," answered Jupp.

"A raft—what is that?"

"Why, sir, it means anything that can swim," replied Jupp, quite in his element when talking of the sea, and always ready to spin a yarn or tell what he knew. "It might be made of spare spars,

or boards, or anything that can float. When I was in the *Neptune* off Terra del Faygo I've seed the natives there coming off to us seated on a couple of branches of a tree lashed together, leaves and all."

"Oh, thank you," said Teddy, rejoiced to hear this, the very hint he wanted; "but what did they do for oars?"

"They used sticks, in course, sir," answered the other, quite unconscious of what the result of his information would be, and that he was sowing the seeds of a wonderful project; and Teddy presently leading on the conversation in a highly diplomatic way to other themes, Jupp forgot by and by what he had been talking about.

Not so, however, Master Teddy.

The very next day, taking up Puck in his arms, and getting away unperceived from home soon after the early dinner, which the children always partook of at noon, he stole down to the pond, where, collecting some of the little villagers to assist him, a grand foray was made on the fencing of the fields and a mass of material brought to the water's edge.

Teddy had noted what Jupp had said about the Tierra del Fuegians lashing their rude rafts together, so he took down with him from the house a quantity of old clothes-lines which he had discovered in the back garden. These he now utilised in tying the pieces of paling from the fences together with, after which a number of small boughs and branches from the hedges were laid on top of the structure, which was then pushed off gently from the bank on to the surface of the pond.

Hurrah, it floated all right!

Teddy therefore had it drawn in again, and stepped upon the raft, which, although it sank down lower in the water and was all awash, still seemed buoyant. He also took Puck with him, and tried to incite some others of the boys to venture out in company with him.

The little villagers, however, were wiser in their generation, and being unused to nautical enterprise were averse to courting danger.

"You're a pack of cowards!" Teddy exclaimed, indignant and angry at their drawing back thus at the last moment. "I'll go by myself."

"Go 'long, master," they cried, noways abashed by his comments on their conduct; "we'll all watch 'ee."

Naturally plucky, Teddy did not need any further spurring, so, all alone on his raft, with the exception of the struggling Puck, who did not like leaving *terra firma*, and was more of a hindrance than an aid, he pushed out into the pond, making for the islet in the centre by means of a long pole which he had thinned off from a piece of fencing, sticking it into the mud at the bottom and pushing against it with all his might. Meanwhile, the frail structure on which he sat trembled and wobbled about in the most unseaworthy fashion, causing him almost to repent of his undertaking almost as soon as he had started, although he had the incense of popular admiration to egg him on, for the village boys were cheering and hooraying him like—"like anything," as he would himself have said!

Chapter Seven.

Father and Son.

The road from the vicarage to the village and station beyond passed within a hundred yards or so of the pond; but from the latter being situated in a hollow and the meadows surrounding it inclosed within a hedge of thick brushwood, it could only be seen by those passing to and fro from one point—where the path began to rise above the valley as it curved round the spur of the down.

It was Saturday also, when, as Teddy well knew, his father would be engaged on the compilation of his Sunday sermon, and so not likely to be going about the parish, as was his custom of an afternoon, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, and warning those evil-doers who preferred idleness and ale at the "Lamb" to honest toil and uprightness of living; consequently the young scapegrace was almost confident of non-interruption from any of his home folk, who, besides being too busy indoors to think of him, were ignorant of his whereabouts. It was also Jupp's heaviest day at the station, so *he* couldn't come after him he thought; and he was enjoying himself to his heart's content, when as the Fates frequently rule it, the unexpected happened.

Miss Conny, now a tall slim girl of thirteen, but more sedate and womanly even than she had been at ten, if that were possible,

was occupied in the parlour "mending the children's clothes," as she expressed it in her matronly way, when she suddenly missed a large reel of darning cotton. Wondering what had become of it, for, being neat and orderly in her habits, her things seldom strayed from their proper places, she began hunting about for the absent article in different directions and turning over the piles of stockings before her.

"Have you seen it?" she asked Liz, who was sitting beside her, also engaged in needlework, but of a lighter description, the young lady devoting her energies to the manufacture of a doll's mantilla.

"No," said Liz abstractedly, her mouth at the time being full of pins for their more handy use when wanted, a bad habit she had acquired from a seamstress occasionally employed at the vicarage.

"Dear me, I wonder if I left the reel upstairs," said Conny, much concerned at the loss; and she was just about prosecuting the search thither when Cissy threw a little light on the subject, explaining at once the cause of the cotton's disappearance.

"Don't you recollect, Con," she observed, "you lent it to Teddy the other day? I don't s'pose he ever returned it to you, for I'm sure I saw it this morning with his things in the nursery."

"No more he did," replied Conny. "Please go and tell him to bring it back. I know where you'll find him. Mary is helping Molly making a pie, and he's certain to be in the kitchen dabbling in the paste."

"All right!" said Cissy; and presently her little musical voice could be heard calling through the house, "Teddy! Teddy!" as she ran along the passage towards the back.

Bye and bye, however, she returned to the parlour unsuccessful.

"I can't see him anywhere," she said. "He's not with Mary, or in the garden, or anywhere!"

"Oh, that boy!" exclaimed Conny. "He's up to some mischief again, and must have gone down to the village or somewhere against papa's orders. Do you know where he is, Liz?"

"No," replied the young sempstress, taking the pins out of her mouth furtively, seeing that Conny was looking at her. "He ran

out of the house before we had finished dinner, and took Puck with him."

"Then he has gone off on one of his wild pranks," said her elder sister, rising up and putting all the stockings into her work-basket. "I will go and speak to papa."

The vicar had just finished the "thirdly, brethren," of his sermon; and he was just cogitating how to bring in his "lastly," and that favourite "word more in conclusion" with which he generally wound up the weekly discourse he gave his congregation, when Conny tapped at the study door timidly awaiting permission to enter.

"What's the matter?" called out Mr Vernon rather testily, not liking to be disturbed in his peroration.

"I want to speak to you, papa," said Conny, still from without.

"Then come in," he answered in a sort of resigned tone of voice, it appearing to him as one of the necessary ills of life to be interrupted, and he as a minister bound to put up with it; but this feeling of annoyance passed off in a moment, and he spoke gently and kindly enough when Conny came into the room.

"What is it, my dear?" he asked, smiling at his little housekeeper, as he called her, noticing her anxious air; "any trouble about to-morrow's dinner, or something equally serious?"

"No, papa," she replied, taking his quizzing in earnest. "The dinner is ordered, and nothing the matter with it that I know of. I want to speak to you about Teddy."

"There's nothing wrong with him, I hope?" said he, jumping up from his chair and wafting some of the sheets of his sermon from the table with his flying coat-tails in his excitement and haste. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

Although a quiet easy-going man generally, the vicar was wrapt up in all his children, trying to be father and mother in one to them and making up as much as in him lay for the loss of that maternal love and guidance of which they were deprived at an age when they wanted it most; but of Teddy he was especially fond, his wife having died soon after giving him birth, and, truth to say, he spoiled him almost as much as that grandmother whose visitations were such a vexed question with Mary,

causing her great additional trouble with her charge after the old lady left.

"Nothing wrong, papa dear, that I know of," replied Conny in her formal deliberative sort of way; "but, I'm afraid he has gone off with those village boys again, for he's nowhere about the place."

"Dear me!" ejaculated the vicar, shoving up his spectacles over his forehead and poking his hair into an erect position like a cockatoo's crest, as he always did when fidgety. "Can't you send somebody after him?"

"Mary is busy, and Teddy doesn't mind Joe, so there's no use in sending him."

"Dear me!" ejaculated her father again. "I'm afraid he's getting very headstrong—Teddy, I mean, not poor Joe! I must really get him under better control; but, I—I don't like to be harsh with him, Conny, you know, little woman," added the vicar dropping his voice. "He's a brave, truthful little fellow with all his flow of animal spirits, and his eyes remind me always of your poor mother when I speak sternly to him and he looks at me in that straightforward way of his."

"Shall I go after him, papa?" interposed Conny at this juncture, seeing that a wave of memory had carried back her father into the past, making him already forget the point at issue.

"What? Oh, dear me, no!" said the vicar, recalled to the present. "I'll go myself."

"But your sermon, papa?"

"It's just finished, and I can complete what has to be added when I come back. No—yes, I'll go; besides, now, I recollect, I have to call at Job Trotter's to try and get him to come to church to-morrow. Yes, I'll go myself."

So saying, the vicar put on the hat Conny handed to him, for she had to look after him very carefully in this respect, as he would sometimes, when in a thinking fit, go out without any covering on his head at all!

Then, taking his stick, which the thoughtful Conny likewise got out of the rack in the hall, he went out of the front door and over the lawn, through the little gate beyond. He then turned into the lane that led across the downs to the village, Miss

Conny having suggested this as the wisest direction in which to look for Teddy, from the remembrance of something the young scapegrace had casually dropped in conversation when at dinner.

As he walked along the curving lane, the air was sweet with the scent of dry clover and the numerous wild flowers that twined amongst the blackberry bushes of the hedgerows. Insects also buzzed about, creating a humming music of their own, while flocks of starlings startled by his approach flew over the field next him to the one further on, exhibiting their speckled plumage as they fluttered overhead, and the whistle of the blackbird and coo of the ring-dove could be heard in the distance.

But the vicar was thinking of none of these things.

Conny's words about Teddy not minding Joe the gardener, or anybody else indeed, had awakened his mind to the consciousness that he had not given proper consideration to the boy's mental training.

Teddy's education certainly was not neglected, for he repeated his lessons regularly to his father and displayed the most promising signs of advancement; but, lessons ended, he was left entirely to the servants. The vicar reflected, that this ought not to be permitted with a child at an age when impressions of right and wrong are so easily made, never to be effaced in after life, once the budding character is formed.

He would correct this error, the vicar determined; in future he would see after him more personally!

Just as he arrived at this sound conclusion the vicar reached the bend of the lane where it sloped round by the spur of the down, a bustling bumblebee making him notice this by brushing against his nose as he buzzed through the air in that self-satisfied important way that all bumblebees affect in their outdoor life; and, looking over the hedge that sank down at this point, he saw a group of boys gathered round the edge of the pond.

He did not recognise Teddy amongst them; but, fancying the urchins might be able to tell him something of his movements, he made towards them, climbing through a gap in the fence and walking down the sloping side of the hill to the meadow below.

The boys, catching sight of him, immediately began to huddle together like a flock of sheep startled by the appearance of some strange dog; and he could hear them calling out some words of warning, in which his familiar title "t'parson" could be plainly distinguished.

"The young imps must be doing something wrong, and are afraid of being found out," thought the vicar. "Never mind, though, I sha'n't be hard on them, remembering my own young truant!"

As he got nearer, he heard the yelp of a dog as if in pain or alarm.

"They're surely not drowning some poor animal," said the vicar aloud, uttering the new thought that flashed across his mind. "If so, I shall most certainly be severe with them; for cruelty is detestable in man or boy!"

Hurrying on, he soon obtained a clear view of the pond, and he could now see that not only were a lot of boys clustered together round the edge of the water, but towards the centre something was floating like a raft with apparently another boy on it, who was holding a struggling white object in his arms, from which evidently the yelps proceeded—his ears soon confirming the supposition.

"Hullo! what are you doing there?" shouted the vicar, quickening his pace. "Don't hurt the poor dog!"

To his intense astonishment the boy on the floating substance turned his face towards him, answering his hail promptly with an explanation.

"It's Puck, padie, and I ain't hurting him."

Both the face and the voice were Teddy's!

The vicar was completely astounded.

"Teddy!" he exclaimed, "can I believe my eyes?—is it really you?"

"Yes, it's me, padie," replied the young scapegrace, trying to balance himself upright on the unsteady platform as he faced his father, but not succeeding in doing so very gracefully.

"Why, how on earth—or rather water, that would be the most correct expression," said the vicar correcting himself, being a student of Paley and a keen logician as to phraseology; "how did you get there?"

"I made a raft," explained Teddy in short broken sentences, which were interrupted at intervals through the necessary exertion he had to make every now and then to keep from tumbling into the water and hold Puck. "I made a raft like—like Robinson Crusoe, and—and—I've brought Puck—uck with me, 'cause I didn't have a parrot or a cat. I—I—I wanted to get to the island; b-b-but I can't go any further as the raft is stuck, and—and I've lost my stick to push it with. Oh—I was nearly over there!"

"It would be a wholesome lesson to you if you got a good ducking!" said the vicar sternly, albeit the reminiscences of Robinson Crusoe and the fact of Teddy endeavouring to imitate that ideal hero of boyhood struck him in a comical light and he turned away to hide a smile. "Come to the bank at once, sir!"

Easy enough as it was for the vicar to give this order, it was a very different thing for Teddy, in spite of every desire on his part, to obey it; for, the moment he put down Puck on the leafy flooring of the raft, the dog began to howl, making him take it up again in his arms. To add to his troubles, also, he had dropped his sculling pole during a lurch of his floating platform, so he had nothing now wherewith to propel it either towards the island or back to the shore, the raft wickedly oscillating midway in the water between the two, like Mahomet's coffin 'twixt heaven and earth!

Urged on, however, by his father's command, Teddy tried as gallantly as any shipwrecked mariner to reach land again; but, what with Puck hampering his efforts, and his brisk movements on the frail structure, this all at once separated into its original elements through the clothes-line becoming untied, leaving Teddy struggling amidst the debris of broken rails and branches—Puck ungratefully abandoning his master in his extremity and making instinctively for the shore.

The vicar plunged in frantically to the rescue, wading out in the mud until he was nearly out of his depth, and then swimming up to Teddy, who, clutching a portion of his dismembered raft, had managed to keep afloat; although, he was glad enough when his father's arm was round him and he found himself presently deposited on the bank in safety, where they were now alone, all the village boys having rushed off *en masse*, yelling

out the alarm at the pitch of their voices the moment Teddy fell in and the vicar went after him.

Both were in a terrible pickle though, with their garments soaking wet, of course; while the vicar especially was bedraggled with mud from head to foot, looking the most unclerical object that could be well imagined. However, he took the whole matter good-humouredly enough, not scolding Teddy in the least.

"The best thing we can do, my son," he said when he had somewhat recovered his breath, not having gone through such violent exercise for many a long day.—"The best thing we can do is to hurry off home as fast we can, so as to arrive there before they hear anything of the accident from other sources, or the girls will be terribly alarmed about us."

Teddy, without speaking, tacitly assented to this plan by jumping up immediately and clutching hold of the shivering Puck, whose asthma, by the way, was not improved by this second involuntary ducking; and the two were hastening towards the vicarage when they heard a horse trotting behind them, Doctor Jolly riding up alongside before they had proceeded very far along the lane, after clambering out of the field where the pond was situated.

"Bless me!" cried the doctor; "why, here are you both safe and sound, when those village urchins said you and Master Teddy were drowned!"

"Ah! I thought these boys were up to something of the sort when they all scampered off in a batch without lending us a helping hand!" replied the vicar laughing. "I was just telling Teddy this, thinking the report would reach home before us."

"Aye, all happen, Vernon? 'Pon my word, you're in a fine mess!"

The vicar thereupon narrated all that had occurred, much to the doctor's amusement.

"Well," he exclaimed at the end of the story, "that boy of yours is cut out for something, you may depend. He won't be drowned at any rate!"

"No," said the vicar reflectively; "this is the second merciful escape he has had from the water."

"Yes, and once from fire, too," put in the other, alluding to the gunpowder episode. "He's a regular young desperado!"

"I hope not, Jolly," hastily interposed the vicar. "I don't like your joking about his escapades in that way. I hope he will be good—eh, my boy?" and he stroked Teddy's head as he walked along by his side, father and son being alike hatless, their headgear remaining floating on the pond, along with the remains of the raft, to frighten the frogs and fishes.

Teddy uttered no reply; but his little heart was full, and he made many inward resolves, which, alas! his eight-year-old nature was not strong enough to keep.

Chapter Eight.

Unappreciated.

He really did not mean any harm; but mischief is mischief whether intentional or not, and somehow or other he seemed continually to be getting into it. Circumstances, over which, of course, he had no control, continually overruled his anxious desire to be good.

As Doctor Jolly said, with his usual strident hearty laugh that could be heard half a mile off, and which was so contagious that it made people smile whose thoughts were the reverse of gay, Teddy was always in hot water, "except, by Jove, when he plunged into the cold, ho, ho!"

With reference to this latter point, however, it may be mentioned here, that albeit he had twice been mercifully preserved from drowning, the vicar, while trustful enough in the divine workings of Providence, did not think it altogether right to allow Teddy's insurance against a watery grave to be entirely dependent on chance; and so, that very evening, when Jupp came up to the house after he had done his work at the station, he broached the subject to him as soon as the worthy porter had been made cognisant of all the facts connected with the raft adventure.

"No," said the vicar, so carried away by his feelings that he almost added "my brethren," fancying himself in the pulpit delivering a homily to his congregation generally, instead of only addressing one hearer, "we ought not to neglect any wise

precaution in guarding against those dangers that beset our everyday lives. Lightly spoken as the adage is, that 'God helps those who help themselves,' it is true enough."

"Aye, aye, sir, and so say I," assented Jupp, rather mystified as to "what the parson was a-driving at," as he mentally expressed it, by this grand beginning, and thinking it had some reference to his not being present at the pond to rescue Teddy in his peril, which he keenly regretted.

"This being my impression," continued the vicar, completing his period, as if rounding a sentence in one of his sermons, wherein he was frequently prone to digress, "and I'm glad to learn from your acquiescent reply that you agree with me on the main issue, eh?"

Jupp nodded his head again, although now altogether in a fog regarding the other's meaning.

"Well, then," said the vicar, satisfied with having at last cleared the ground for stating his proposition, "I want you to devote any leisure time you may have in the course of the next few weeks to teaching my son to swim; so that, in the event of his unhappily falling into the water again, when neither you nor I may be near, he may be able to save himself—under providence, that is."

"I was just about a-thinking on the same thing, sir, when you began a-speaking," observed Jupp thoughtfully, scratching his head in his reflective way as he stood before the vicar cap in hand at the door of the study, where the conference was being held. "I fancied you didn't like me taking him down to the river, or I'd have taught him to swim long ago, I would, sir!"

"Then I may depend on your doing so now, eh?"

"Sartenly, sir! I'll be proud, that I will, to show him," answered Jupp eagerly, mightily pleased with the task intrusted to him, having long wished to undertake it; and so, he being willing, and his pupil nothing loth, Teddy was in a comparatively short space so well instructed how to support himself in the water that he was quite capable of swimming across the river without fear of being sucked down into the mill-race—although he made both his father and Jupp a promise, which he honourably kept, of never bathing there unless accompanied by either of the two.

Not only this, but he could also essay the muddy depths of the pond in the meadow whenever the fancy seized him, exploring

the little island in its centre at his own sweet will; and this accomplishment, as will be seen further on, stood him in good stead at one of the most critical periods of his life, although this is anticipating.

But, learning swimming, and so lessening the risk attending peril by water, did not prevent him from getting into scrapes on land; for, he was a brave, fearless boy, and these very qualities, added to a natural impulsiveness of disposition, were continually leading him into rash enterprises which almost invariably ended in mishap and disaster, if not to himself, to those who unwittingly were involved in his ventures, alas!

In his ninth year, Jupp got a rise on the line, being promoted to be assistant station-master at a neighbouring town, which necessarily involved his leaving Endleigh; and, being now also able to keep a wife in comfort, the long courtship which had been going on between him and Mary was brought to a happy conclusion by matrimony, a contingency that involved the loss to the vicar's household of Mary's controlling influence, leaving Master Teddy more and more to himself, with no one in authority to look after him.

Under these circumstances, the vicar, acting on Doctor Jolly's advice, sent him to a small private school in the village where the farmers' sons of the vicinity were taught the rudiments of their education, Teddy going thither every morning and afternoon in company with his sisters Liz and Cissy, who received lessons from a retired governess dwelling hard by—the three children returning home in the middle of the day for their dinner, and again on the termination of their tasks in the evening.

Miss Conny, who had passed through the same curriculum, had grown too old for her teacher, and now remained at the vicarage, installed as her father's housekeeper and head of the family in his absence.

This arrangement worked very well for a time, although Teddy did not make any very rapid progress at his studies, his mind being more turned to outdoor sports than book lore; but the association with others made him, if more manly, less tractable, developing his madcap propensities to a very considerable extent, if merely from his desire to emulate his companions.

One day, when going homewards with Liz and Cissy across the fields from Endleigh, the trio came upon a group of the idle boys of the village who were assembled in front of an inclosed

paddock containing Farmer Giles's brindled bull, a savage animal, whose implacable viciousness was the talk of the place; not even the ploughman, with whom he was more familiar than anyone else, daring to approach him without the protection of a long-handled pitchfork.

Neither Farmer Giles nor any of his men were about, and the boys, taking advantage of the opportunity, were baiting the bull by shying clods at him and otherwise rousing his temper, when Teddy and his sisters came along.

Teddy fired up at once at the sight.

"You cowards!" he cried; "you stand there behind the fence pelting the poor animal, but none of you have the pluck to go inside and do it!"

"No more have you, Meaister," retorted one of the biggest of the boys, a rustic lout of sixteen. "You ain't got the plook t' go inside yoursen!"

"Haven't I?" said Teddy in answer to this taunt; and before his sisters could prevent him he had darted over to where the boys were standing, and climbing over the stout five-barred gate that gave admittance to the inclosure, let himself down into the paddock—confronting the bull without even a stick in his hand.

The savage animal appeared so much surprised at the temerity of such a little fellow as Teddy invading his domain, that he allowed him to advance several steps without making a movement; when, putting down his head, as if trying the points of his horns, and pawing the ground, he uttered a wild bellow that brought forth a responsive shriek from Cissy.

"Come back, Teddy, come back!" she screamed, turning quite pale with fright. "He's coming after you, and will toss you on his cruel horns. Oh, do come back!"

Teddy, however, still continued advancing towards the infuriated brute, waving his arms and shouting in the endeavour to intimidate it. He was sorry he had gone into the paddock; but he had some idea that if he retreated the bull would make a rush at him, and thought that by showing he was not afraid, he might presently retire with all the honours of war, so he preserved a courageous front, although his heart went pit-a-pat all the while.

Again, the bull lowered his horns and tossed up his head.

He was quite close to him now; and Teddy stopped, the bull eyeing him and he looking at it steadfastly.

The situation was alarming, so he stepped back gingerly, whereupon the bull advanced at the same moment, with another loud bellow, the smoke coming out of his red nostrils, and his little eyes flaming with fire.

This caused all Teddy's courage to evaporate, and the next moment, forgetting all his previous caution, he turned and ran as hard as he could for the gate; but, the bull, in two strides, catching him up on his horns like a bundle of hay, tossed him high in the air, amidst the screams and shouts of Cissy and Liz and all the village boys commingled, the triumphant roar of the animal overtopping them all as it bellowed forth a paean of victory.

Fortunately for Teddy, a pollard elm stood just within the paddock, breaking his fall as he tumbled towards the ground, where the bull was looking up awaiting him, with the intention of catching him again on his horns; and the branches receiving his body in their friendly shelter, he was saved from tumbling down, when he would have been at the mercy of his enemy.

Still, there he hung, like Absalom, another naughty boy before him, suspended by his clothes if not by his hair, the bull bellowing and keeping guard round the tree to prevent his further escape; and it was not until the ploughman had been called by one of the village boys and driven away the animal that Teddy was able to climb down from his insecure perch and regain the others.

He was glad enough to get out of the paddock, it may be safely asserted; and then, when he was examined, it was discovered, much to the wonder of everybody, including himself, that, beyond a scratch or two from the branches of the elm, he was quite unhurt, in spite of the toss the bull gave him and his unexpected flight through the air!

But his daring, if unproductive of any evil consequences towards himself personally, caused harm to others, the ploughman being badly gored while driving off the violent animal through his missing his footing when aiming a blow at it with his pitchfork; while poor Cissy was in such a fright at the mishap, that after screaming herself hoarse she went off in hysterics, the attack ending in a fit of convulsions on her getting home, making her so ill that the doctor had to be summoned to bring her back to consciousness.

Teddy in consequence had a serious lecture from the vicar, who pointed out to him the difference between real courage and foolhardiness; but the lesson did not strike very deep, and soon he was his wayward self again, his sister Conny being too near his own age to have any authority over him, while his father was too much of a student and dreamer to exercise any judicious control in restraining his exuberant nature.

By the time he was twelve years of age he was like a wild unbroken colt, although he had still the same honest outspoken look in his bright blue eyes, and was a fine manly little fellow who would not have, told a lie to save himself from punishment, or wilfully hurt chick or child; but, scapegrace he was still, as he had been almost from his earliest infancy.

He really could not help it.

When Jupp and Mary paid their periodical visit at the vicarage to see how the family were getting on, bringing anon another little Jupp with them, they were certain to hear of something terrible that Master Teddy had done; for all the village talked of him now and took heed of his misdeeds, the recital of which, as is usual in such cases, lost nothing by the telling.

They were only ordinary boyish freaks; but they seemed awful to the quiet, sleepy countryfolk who inhabited Endleigh.

Once, his grandmother rather unwisely brought down a pistol for him from London; and Teddy thereupon having his imagination excited by what he had read of pirates and highwaymen in the works of romance which he devoured whenever he could get hold of them, went about fancying himself a bold buccaneer and freebooter, firing at everything moving within as well as out of range, along the solitary country lanes and hedgerows—thereby frightening passers-by frequently with untimely shots close to their ears, and making them believe their last hour had come.

It was in this way that he peppered old Stokes's sow, which was taking a quiet walk abroad seeking a convenient wallowing place, when the squeals of the unlucky beast were a nine days' wonder, albeit "it was all cry and little wool," as the Irishman said when he shaved his pig, the animal being not much hurt.

Still, old Stokes did not like it, and complained to the squire, who remonstrated with the vicar, and the latter in his turn lectured Teddy—the matter ending there as far as he was concerned, although the squeals of the afflicted sow were

treasured up and remembered against him in the chronicles of Endleigh.

The place was so dull, that having nothing particular to keep him occupied—for he had long since learned all the village schoolmaster could teach him, and it was a mere farce his remaining any longer under his tutelage—the wonder was, not that Teddy got into any mischief at all, but that he did not fall into more; and Doctor Jolly was continually speaking to his father about neglecting him in that way, urging that he should be sent to some good boarding-school at a distance to prepare him for the university, Mr Vernon intending that the boy should follow in his own footsteps and go into the church, having the same living after him that he had inherited from his father.

But the vicar would not hear of this.

"No," said he, "he shall stop here and be educated by me in the same way as I was educated by my poor father before going to Oxford. He's a bright intelligent boy—you don't think him an ignoramus, Jolly, eh?"

"Not by any means, by Jove," laughed the doctor. "He knows too much already. What I think he wants is a little proper restraint and control. Master Teddy has too much his own way."

"Ah! I can't be hard with him, Jolly," sighed the vicar. "Whenever I try to speak to him with severity he looks me in the face with those blue eyes of his, and I think of my poor wife, his mother. He's the very image of her, Jolly!"

"Well, well," said the doctor, putting the subject away, considering it useless to press the point; "I'm afraid you'll regret it some day, though I hope not."

"I hope not, indeed," replied the vicar warmly. "Teddy isn't a bad boy. He has never told me a falsehood in his life, and always confesses to any fault he has committed."

"That doesn't keep him out of mischief though," said the doctor grimly as he went off, atoning to himself for having found fault with Teddy by giving him a drive out to the squire's, and allowing him to take his horse and gig back by himself, an indulgence that lifted Teddy into the seventh heaven of delight.

However, as events turned out, the very means by which the doctor thought to clear the reproach from his own soul of

having advised the vicar about Teddy, indirectly led to his advice being followed.

On alighting at the squire's and handing him the reins, he told Teddy to be very particular in driving slowly, the horse being a high-spirited one, and apt to take the bit in his teeth if given his head or touched with the whip; so, as long as he was in sight Teddy obeyed these injunctions, coaxing the bay along as quietly as if he were assisting at a funeral procession.

Directly he got beyond range of observation from the house, though, he made amends for his preliminary caution, shaking the reins free, and giving the horse a smart cut under the loins that made it spring forward like a goat, almost jumping out of the traces; and then, away it tore along the road towards the village at the rate of twenty miles an hour, the gig bounding from rut to rut as if it were a kangaroo, and shaking Teddy's bones together like castanets.

Once the animal had got its head, the boy found it useless to try and stop him; while, as for guidance, the horse no more cared about his pulling at the bit than if he were a fly, plunging onward in its wild career, and whisking the gig from side to side, so that Teddy was fully employed in holding on without attempting to pull the reins at all.

For a mile or two the roadway was pretty clear, but on nearing Endleigh it became narrower; and here, just in front, Teddy could see a loaded farm wagon coming along.

To have passed it safely either he or the wagoner would have had to pull up on one side; but with him now it was impossible to do this, while the driver of the other vehicle was half asleep, and nodding from amidst the pile of straw with which the wagon was loaded, letting the team jingle along at a slow walk.

A collision, therefore, was inevitable, and hardly had Teddy come to this conclusion than smash, bang, it followed!

There was a terrible jolt, and he suddenly felt himself doing a somersault, waking up the wagoner by tumbling on top of him above the straw, whither he had hurled as from a catapult by the sudden stoppage of the gig in its mad career; and when he came to himself he saw that the fragments of the vehicle lay scattered about under the front of the wagon, against which it had been violently impelled, the bay cantering down to its own stable with its broken traces dangling behind it.

Teddy was thunderstruck at the mishap.

He had not thought there was any danger in disobeying the doctor's instructions, and yet here was the gig smashed up and the wagoner's horses injured irreparably, one poor brute having to be shot afterwards; besides which he did not know what had become of the runaway animal.

All the mishap had arisen through disobedience!

He went home at once and told his father everything; but the vicar, though comforting him by saying that he would get the doctor a new gig, and recompense the farmer to whom the wagon belonged for the loss of his team, seemed to have his eyes awakened at last to the evil to which Doctor Jolly had so vainly tried to direct his attention.

He determined that Teddy should go to school.

But, before this intention could be carried out, there was a most unexpected arrival at the vicarage.

This was no less a personage than Uncle Jack, whom neither Teddy nor his sisters had ever seen before, he having gone to sea the same year the vicar had married, and never been heard of again, the vessel in which he had sailed having gone down, and all hands reported lost.

Uncle Jack hadn't foundered, though, if his ship had, for here he was as large as life, and that was very large, he weighing some fourteen or fifteen stone at the least!

What was more, he had passed through the most wonderful adventures and been amongst savages. These experiences enabled him to recount the most delightful and hairbreadth yarns—yarns that knocked all poor Jupp's stories of the cut-and-dried cruises he had had in the navy into a cocked hat, Teddy thought, as he hung on every utterance of this newly-found uncle, longing the while to be a sailor and go through similar experiences.

Uncle Jack took to him amazingly, too, and when he had become domesticated at the vicarage, asked one day what he was going to be.

"What, make a parson of him, brother-in-law!" exclaimed the sailor in horrified accents. "You'd never spoil such a boy as that, who's cut out for a sailor, every inch of him—not, of course,

that I wish to say a word against your profession. Still, he can't go into the church yet; what are you going to do with him in the meantime, eh?"

"Send him to school," replied the other.

"Why, hasn't he been yet?"

"Oh, yes, he's not altogether ignorant," said the vicar. "I think he's a very fair scholar for his years."

"Then why dose him any more with book learning, eh? When you fill a water-cask too full it's apt to run over!"

"I quite agree with you about cramming, Jack," said the vicar, smiling at the nautical simile; "but, I'm sending Teddy to a leading school more for the sake of the discipline than for anything more that I want him to learn at present."

"Discipline, eh! is that your reason, brother-in-law? Then allow me to tell you he'll get more of that at sea than he ever will at school."

"Oh, father!" interrupted Teddy, who had been present all the time during the confab, listening as gravely as any judge to the discussion about his future, "do let me be a sailor! I'd rather go to sea than anything."

"But you might be drowned, my boy," said the vicar gravely, his thoughts wandering to every possible danger of the deep.

"No fear of that," answered Teddy smiling. "Why, I can swim like a fish; and there's Uncle Jack now, whom you all thought lost, safe and sound after all his voyages!"

"Aye and so I am!" chorused the individual alluded to.

"Well, well, we'll think of it," said the vicar. "I'll hear what my old friend Jolly has to say to the plan first."

But he could not have consulted a more favourable authority as far as Teddy was concerned.

"The very thing for him!" said the doctor approvingly. "I don't think you could ever turn him into a parson, Vernon. He has too much animal spirits for that; think of my gig, ho! ho!"

Overcome by the many arguments brought forward, and the general consensus of judgment in favour of the project, the vicar at last consented that Teddy might be allowed to go to sea under the aegis of Uncle Jack, who started off at once to London to see about the shipping arrangements; when the rest of the household set to work preparing the young sailor's outfit in the meantime, so that no time might be lost—little Cissy making him a wonderful anti-macassar, which, in spite of all ridicule to the contrary, she asserted would do for the sofa in his cabin!

Of course, Jupp and Mary came over to wish Teddy good-bye; but, albeit there was much grief among the home circle at the vicarage when they escorted him to the little railway-station, on the day he left there were not many tears shed generally at his going, for, to paraphrase not irreverently the words of the Psalmist, "Endleigh, at heart, was glad at his departing, and the people of the village let him go free!"

Chapter Nine.

At Sea.

"Well, here we are, my hearty!" said Uncle Jack, who was on the watch for him at London Bridge station, and greeted him the moment the train arrived; "but, come, look sharp, we've a lot to do before us, and precious little time to do it in!"

Teddy, however, was not inclined at first to "look sharp."

On the contrary, he looked extremely sad, being very melancholy at leaving home, and altogether "down in the mouth," so to speak.

This arose, not so much from the fact of his parting with his father and sisters, dearly as he loved them all in his way; but, on account of poor Puck, who, whether through grief at his going away, which the intelligent little animal seemed quite as conscious of through the instinct of his species as if he were a human being, or from his chronic asthma coming to a crisis, breathed his last in Teddy's arms the very morning of his departure from home!

The doggy, faithful to the end, was buried in the garden, Conny, Cissy, and Liz attending his obsequies, and the two latter weeping with Teddy over his grave, for all were fond of Puck;

but none lamented him so deeply as he, and all the journey up to town, as the train sped its weary way along, his mind was busy recalling all the incidents that attended their companionship from the time when his grandmother first gave him as a present. He was a brisk young dog then, he remembered, the terror of all strange cats and hunter of rabbits, but his affection had not swerved down to the last year of their association, when, toothless and wheezy, he could hunt no more, and cats came fearlessly beneath his very nose when he went through the feeble pretence of trying to gnaw a bone on the lawn.

Poor Puck—*requiescat in pace!*

Still, doggy or no doggy, Uncle Jack was not the sort of fellow to let Teddy remain long in the dumps, especially as he had said there was a good deal to be done; and, soon, Teddy was in such a whirl of excitement, with everything new and strange around him, that he had no time left to be melancholy in.

First, Uncle Jack hailed a hansom, all Teddy's belongings in the shape of luggage being left in the cloak-room at the terminus, and the two jumping in were driven off as rapidly as the crowded state of the streets would allow, to Tower Hill, where the offices of the shipping agents owning the *Greenock* were situated.

Here Uncle Jack deposited a cheque which the vicar had given him, and Master Teddy was bound over in certain indentures of a very imposing character as a first-class apprentice to the said firm, the lad then signing articles as one of the crew of the *Greenock*, of which vessel, it may be mentioned, Uncle Jack had already been appointed chief officer, so that he would be able to keep a watchful eye over his nephew in his future nautical career.

"Now that job's done," said Uncle Jack when all the bothersome writing and signing were accomplished and the vicar's cheque paid over, "we'll have a run down to look at the ship; what say you to that, eh?"

"All right!" responded Teddy, much delighted at the idea; and the pair then were driven from Tower Hill to the Fenchurch Street railway-station, where they dismissed their cab and took train for the docks, the state of locomotion in the neighbourhood of which does not readily permit of the passage of wheeled vehicles, a hansom running the risk of being squashed into the semblance of a pancake against the heavy

drays blocking the narrow streets and ways, should it adventure within the thoroughfares thereof.

On their arrival at Poplar, Uncle Jack threaded his way with amazing ease and familiarity through a narrow lane with high walls on either hand, and then into a wide gateway branching off at right angles. Entering within this Teddy found himself in a vast forest of masts, with ships loading and unloading at the various quays and jetties alongside the wharves, opposite to lines of warehouses that seemed to extend from one end of the docks to the other.

Uncle Jack was not long in tumbling across the *Greenock*, which had nearly completed taking in her cargo and was to "warp out next morning," as he told Teddy, who didn't know what on earth he meant by the phrase, by the way.

There appeared to be a great deal of confusion going on in front of the jetty to which she was moored; but Uncle Jack took him on board and introduced him to Mr Capstan, the second officer, as a future messmate, who showed him the cabins and everything, telling him to "make himself at home!"

The *Greenock* was a fine barque-rigged vessel of some two thousand tons, with auxiliary steam-power; and she gained her living or earned her freight, whichever way of putting it may please best, by sailing to and fro in the passenger trade between the ports of London and Melbourne, but doing more in the goods line on the return journey, because colonials bent on visiting the mother country generally prefer the mail steamers as a speedier route. Emigrants, however, are not so squeamish, contenting themselves in getting out to Australia, that land of promise to so many hard-up and despairing people at home, by whatever means they can—so long only as they may hope to arrive there at some time or other!

Teddy was surprised at the gorgeousness of the *Greenock's* saloons and cabins, and the height of her masts, and the multitude of ropes about running in every conceivable direction, crossing and recrossing each other with the bewildering ingenuity of a spider's web; but Uncle Jack took all these wonders as a matter of course, and rather pooh-poohed them.

"Wait till you see her at Gravesend," he said. "She's all dismantled now with these shore lumpers and lubbers aboard, and won't be herself till she's down the river and feels herself in sailors' hands again. Why, you won't know her! But come along, laddie, we've got to buy a sea-chest and a lot of things to

complete your kit; and then, we'll go to granny's and try to see something of the sights of London."

So, back they trudged again to the Poplar station and were wafted once more to Fenchurch Street, where Uncle Jack dived within the shop of a friendly outfitter, who had a mackintosh and sextant swinging in front of his establishment to show his marine leanings and dealings.

Here, a white sea-chest, whose top was made like a washing-stand, and several other useful articles, were purchased by Uncle Jack without wasting any time, as he had made up his mind what he wanted before going in and knew what he was about; and these things being ordered to be forwarded to the cloak-room at the London Bridge station, to be placed with Teddy's other luggage, Uncle Jack rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Now that business is all settled," he said, "we can enjoy ourselves a bit, as the ship won't be ready for us till next Monday. Come along, my hearty! Let us bear up for granny's—you haven't been to her place before, have you, eh?"

No, Teddy explained. Granny had often been down to Endleigh to see him, but he had never been up to town to see her; that first attempt of his, which had been frustrated by Mary's pursuit and the machinations of Jupp, having deterred him, somehow or other, from essaying the journey a second time. Indeed, he had never been to London at all.

"My!" exclaimed Uncle Jack. "What a lot there'll be for you to see, my hearty, eh?"

What is more, he showed him, too, all that was to be seen, taking Teddy to monuments and exhibitions, to galleries and even to the theatre.

The time passed by rapidly enough—too rapidly, granny thought, when the day came for her to say good-bye to Teddy; but he was nothing loth to go, longing to be on board the *Greenock* as one belonging to her of right, and feel himself really at sea.

Granny wanted him to have another little dog in place of Puck; however, he couldn't make up his mind to a substitute to supersede the former animal's hold on his affections. Besides this, Uncle Jack said the captain did not allow anybody to have dogs on board, and that was a clincher to the argument at once.

Monday morning came, and with it another railway journey. It really seemed to Teddy as if he were "on the line," like Jupp!

The *Greenock*, having taken in all her cargo, had been warped out of dock and then towed down the river to Gravesend, where she was now lying moored in the stream off the Lobster.

"There she is!" cried Uncle Jack when they got down to the beach.

"Where?" asked Teddy, not recognising the dirty untidy hulk he had seen in the docks, as she first appeared to him before he was taken on board and noticed the elegance of her cabins, in the thing of beauty he saw now before him; with every spar in its place and snow-white canvas extended in peaceful folds from the yards, as the vessel lay at anchor with her topsails dropped and her courses half clewed up, ready to spread her wings like an ocean bird.

What a change there was in her!

"Look, right in front there, laddie," said Uncle Jack. "Can't you see? She's just about making-sail, so we'd better get on board as soon as possible. Hi, boatman, seen any one belonging to the *Greenock* ashore?"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the man addressed, "her boat's just over there by the p'int, just agoin' to shove off."

"Thank you, my hearty," said Uncle Jack, giving him a trifle for the information; and in another minute or so Teddy found himself in the *Greenock's* jolly-boat in company with a lot of the new hands, like himself, going off to join the ship. Here on his arrival on board, he was introduced to Captain Lennard, the monarch of all he surveyed as far as the deck of the *Greenock* was concerned, and his future commander.

Teddy liked the look of him; while he, on his part, seemed to like the look of Teddy, smiling kindly when he saw him come over the gangway after Uncle Jack. He had the general appearance of a brown Jupp, being of the same height and with just such a smiling good-humoured face, with the exception that his hair and beard, instead of being black, was of a lighter and ruddier hue.

Oh, yes, Teddy thought, Captain Lennard was the man for him. He looked easy and kind-hearted and would not bully people, as he had read of some brutal captains doing.

"This your nephew?" he asked Uncle Jack politely.

"Yes, sir," replied the other, touching his cap, being in regular nautical rig now, as also was Teddy, who, clad in spick-and-span reefer costume, felt as proud as Punch.

"Ah! then, if he's like you I think we'll get along very well together, Mr Althorp," said the captain with a bow and smile. "He looks like a chip of the old block too!"

"You're very good to say that, sir," stammered Uncle Jack, blushing at the compliment. "The youngster's very like my poor sister, and I suppose resembles me, as she and I were twins. I've no doubt, though, you'll find him teachable when he's licked into shape; for, he isn't a bad lad from what I have seen of him as yet, and is plucky enough, if all I've heard of him down at Endleigh be true."

"Well, Master Vernon, I hope you'll justify the character your uncle gives of you. If you only obey orders there'll be no fear of our falling out. But, mind, I'm captain of this ship; so look out for squalls if you shirk duty or try on any tricks!"

The captain said this pleasantly, but there was a stern look combined in the twinkle of his hazel eyes beneath their thick brown eyebrows, like penthouses overshadowing them; and Teddy felt that, with all his gentleness and joking way, he was a man who intended to command and likewise to be obeyed.

A moment later Captain Lennard changed the conversation by asking Uncle Jack if all the hands were on board.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the other. "The whole batch, I think, came out with us. Isn't that so, Mr Capstan?" he asked, turning to the second-mate, who was standing close by.

"Yes, all hands aboard," replied the second-mate laconically.

"Then make sail at once," said Captain Lennard, going aft on the poop; while Mr Capstan bustled forwards, shouting out as he scrambled up on the windlass bitts and thence to the fo'c's'le, "All hands make sa-i-il!" drawling out the last word as if it were a chorus to some mariner's ditty he were singing.

The crew were all picked men, the majority having been in the ship on one or two previous voyages; so they were quite at home, and sprang into the rigging long before the second-mate had got to the end of his refrain.

In a second, the topsails were dropped and sheeted home, and the rattling of the clewgarnet blocks told of the courses following their example; after which the hands aloft then loosed the topgallant, there being a fine breeze fair for the Downs.

Teddy was puzzled for a moment by all the seeming confusion that reigned in the ship, with ropes flying about and cordage cracking, while the hoarse orders issued by Mr Capstan and Uncle Jack were answered by the cheery cry of the men, singing out lustily as they hoisted and pulled at the halliards with a will. But, the confusion was only momentary and in appearance only; for, hardly had he begun to realise what all the bustle was about, than the ship was clothed in canvas from truck to deck, like a lady attired for a ball all in white!

The headyards were then backed, and Captain Lennard's voice rang through the vessel fore and aft as clear as a bell—

"Hands up anchor!"

Then, the windlass was wound; and, slip, slap, click, clack, it went round the pawl belaying every inch of cable got in.

"Cheerily, men! heave with a will!" urged the second-mate; and the brawny fellows bent all their strength to the handspikes, heaving them down with sheer brute force.

"Hove short!" presently sang out Mr Capstan.

"Up with it!" responded Captain Lennard from the poop, where the pilot now appeared by his side awaiting all these preparations to be completed before taking charge of the ship.

Half-a-dozen more heaves and the anchor-stock showed above the water.

"Hook cat!" cried the second-mate.

"I wonder what that means!" thought Teddy. "I hope they won't hurt the poor thing!"

But, the next moment, he was undeceived.

Nothing in the shape of cruelty to animals was about to be perpetrated.

Mr Capstan only ordered the men to hook on the tackle by which the head of the anchor was to be braced up; and, before

he could say "Jack Robinson," if he had been that way inclined, the falls were manned and the anchor run up to the cathead with a rousing chorus as the men scampered aft with the tail-end of the rope.

The headyards were then filled, and the ship bowed her head as if in salute to Father Neptune, the next instant gathering way as the sails began to draw.

"Port!" sang out the pilot from the bridge.

"Port it is," responded the man at the wheel, shifting the spokes with both hands like a squirrel in a cage, it seemed to Teddy, who was looking at him from the break of the poop, where he had taken up his station by Captain Lennard's orders so that he might the more easily see all that was going on.

"Steady!"

"Steady it is," repeated the helmsman in parrot fashion.

And so, conning and steering along, the *Greenock* was soon bounding on her way down channel, passing Deal and rounding the South Foreland before noon.

Teddy at last was really at sea!

Chapter Ten.

Taking French Leave.

The weather was beautifully fine for October, with a bright warm sun shining down and lighting up the water, which curled and crested before the spanking nor'-east breeze, that brought with it that bracing tone which makes the month, in spite of its autumnal voice warning us of the approach of winter, one of the most enjoyable in our changeable climate—especially to those dwelling along the south coast, which the good ship *Greenock* now trended by on her passage out of the Channel.

Teddy as yet, although this was his first experience of "a life on the ocean wave," was not sea-sick; for, although the vessel heeled well over to the wind on the starboard tack she did not roll, but ploughed through the little wavelets as calmly as if on a mill-pond, only rising now and again to make a graceful

courtesy to some cross current that brought a swell over from the opposite shore of France, for after passing Beachy Head she kept well off the land on the English side.

A west-nor'-west course brought the *Greenock* off Saint Catharine's Point; but the evening had drawn in too much for Teddy to see anything of the Isle of Wight, and when he woke up next morning the ship was abreast of the Start Point.

From thence, he had a fair view of the Devon and Cornish coasts in the distance all the way to the Lizard, the scene being like an ever-changing panorama, with plenty of life and movement about in the vessels the *Greenock* was continually passing either outwards or homewards bound; while the little trawlers and fishing-boats clustered in groups here and there, and there was the occasional smoke from some steamer steaming along the horizon, like a dark finger-post above the level of the sea in the distance.

He enjoyed it all, as, although he had found his bunk in the cabin rather close and stuffy after his nice airy bed-room at the vicarage, he was still not sea-sick; and, as he leant over the taffrail, watching the creamy wake the ship left behind her, spreading out broader and broader until it was lost in the surrounding waste of waters, what with the sniff of the saline atmosphere and the bracing breeze, he began to feel hungry, longing for breakfast-time to come and wondering when he would hear the welcome bell sound to tell that the meal was ready.

No one was on deck, at least on the poop, when he came up, save the helmsman, and Mr Capstan, the latter walking up and down briskly on the windward side and exchanging a word now and again with the pilot on the bridge; so Teddy felt a little forlorn.

Presently, the second-mate, taking a longer turn in his quarterdeck walk, came up and spoke to him.

"Well, young shaver," he said, "how are you getting on?"

"Very well, thank you, sir," replied Teddy, touching his cap, as Uncle Jack had told him he must always do to his superior officer.

"Ah! you're like a young bear, and have all your troubles before you," the other next remarked consolingly, adding immediately afterwards the query: "Seen any of your messmates yet?"

"No, sir," replied Teddy, looking a bit puzzled—"that is, excepting yourself and the captain, and Uncle Jack, of course. Are there any other midshipmen like myself?"

"Aye, if you call the apprentices so, young shaver," said Mr Capstan with an ironical grin which did not improve his rather ugly face. "There are two more of you; and the lazy young hounds must be snoozing below, for they haven't shown a leg yet. However, I'll soon rouse 'em up!"

So saying, he shouted out to one of the hands in the waist forwards: "Here, Bill Summers!"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the man, looking up towards the break of the poop, whence the second-mate had hailed him, leaning over the rail.

"Just go and call Jones and Maitland. Tell 'em to turn out sharp or I'll stop their grog," cried Mr Capstan.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the man, proceeding towards the deck-house, which occupied a middle position in the ship between the poop and fo'c's'le; and presently, although hidden from the gaze of those aft, he could be heard rapping at one of the doors, repeating in whispered tones the order the second-mate had given him.

Ere long, a couple of striplings appeared, dressed in dirty uniforms which presented a marked difference to that of Teddy; and he noticed besides that one was considerably taller than he was while the second was shorter and a little slimmer.

"Here, you, Jones and Maitland, I won't have you caulking away this bright morning when the sun ought to be scorching the sleep out of your eyes. What do you mean by it, eh?" began Mr Capstan as if lashing himself into a passion, but had not quite got enough steam up yet.

"I thought, sir, as this is our first day out and the ship still in charge of the pilot, we needn't turn out so early," said Jones, the biggest of the two, acting as spokesman.

"You thought!" snarled the second-mate, catching up a rope's-end with the apparent intention of laying it across the shoulders of Jones, only he kept a wary distance away. "I've half a mind to give you something for answering me like that! No one has any business to think on board ship."

"Aye, where you're boss!" said the offender speaking aside.

"What is that you're jabbering?" quickly interposed Mr Capstan—"some impudence, I reckon. Now, just you pull off those patent-leather pumps of yours and set to work washing decks. It's gone six bells, and it ought to have been done half an hour ago."

Teddy thought this was a very unkind cut of the mate at poor Jones's boots, which were a dilapidated pair of bluchers that needed mending badly; still, he couldn't help smiling, which didn't seem to please Mr Capstan, who, turning round, now addressed him:

"And you, my fine young shaver, with your dandy rig, you'd better be doing something to earn your salt, and not be a useless lubber, looking on like a fine lady! You just put off and go and help Jones."

Teddy, though he didn't relish the job, obeyed willingly; and soon he was paddling about in bare feet with his trousers rolled up to the knee, while the crew under Jones's direction rigged the head pump and sluiced the decks down from end to end of the ship, beginning with the poop and ending with the midship section in the waist, where all the water was collected in a sort of small lake and had to be swabbed out of the scuttles.

Young Maitland meanwhile had been sent up the main royal mast to clear the dog vane, which had somehow or other got fouled; so Mr Capstan, satisfied at seeing everybody busily employed but himself, paced contentedly up and down the poop, sniffing about and snorting occasionally like an old grampus, as if in satisfaction at "taking it out of the youngsters."

The man was naturally a bully, and loved to display the little authority he had by "hazing" those under him, to use the technical sea phrase.

By dint of continually nagging at the men below from his commanding position above, the second-mate hurried them up so with their work that in a very short space of time the decks were scrubbed and washed, the sun drying them almost without the use of the swab.

Mr Capstan then set them to work coiling down the loose ropes lying about, there being nothing else to do, as the ship had not altered her course but remained on the starboard tack with the

wind well on her quarter; and, although everything had been made snug before leaving the Downs, he was just going to tell the hands to unship the motley contents of the long-boat and stow it again afresh in default of some other task, when eight bells struck, and Uncle Jack came up from below to relieve him from his watch—a relief, it may be added, to all hands in more than one sense!

Presently, Captain Lennard came on deck too; although he must not be thought lazy for being so late, for he had remained up with the pilot on the bridge all night conning the ship, only turning in for a short nap at daylight.

Then, the passengers, of whom there were some sixty in the first-class saloon, began to creep up the companion, one by one as if not yet accustomed to the somewhat unsteady footing of a ship's deck at sea; as for the steerage emigrants they remained below, and even after they had been weeks afloat it required almost force to drive them up into the fresh air.

Teddy was looking at the queer figures some of the gentlemen and ladies presented on the poop, when all at once the breakfast gong sounded, and they all scuttled down much faster than they had come up, the sea air having given those able to get out of their bunks fresh appetites after they had paid homage to Neptune.

He was not invited to go down with these, however, having to mess along with Jones and Maitland in the deck-house close to the galley, where the three mids consoled themselves with the reflection that if they were excluded from the saloon, at all events they were nearer the place where their meals were cooked, and so had the advantage of getting them hotter!

After breakfast the pilot left the ship, a boat putting out for him from the land when they were near Saint Michael's; and then Captain Lennard, hauling round a bit, shaped a west-south-west course, steering out into the broad Atlantic until he had reached longitude 12 degrees West, when the vessel's head was turned to the south for Madeira and the Canaries.

Strange to say, Teddy up to now had not been once sick.

It is true they had not as yet had any rough weather; but the sea was brisk enough to try the stomachs of all the landmen on board, so it was curious he was not affected in any way by the ship's motion.

As Uncle Jack said at the first, he was a born sailor!

Soon he began, too, to understand his duties; and being naturally quick of intellect and active, he after a time became handier on the yards and up aloft than little Maitland, who had been two voyages out and home before; while Jones had to exert himself to hold his own with him—with Uncle Jack, besides, coaching him up in seamanship, Teddy ere the vessel had reached Madeira was a greenhand no longer.

At Teneriffe Captain Lennard put in to coal, the ship being, as formerly mentioned, an auxiliary screw, and able to enlist the aid of steam when she came to the calm latitudes, which they were now approaching.

The passengers being allowed to go on shore for a few hours, Teddy received permission to accompany those taking advantage of the opportunity of landing.

There was no time to try and climb up the celebrated peak, which can be seen so far out at sea that it looks like an island in the clouds; but there was much amusement gained in donkey riding and studying the manners and customs of the natives.

The garments, Teddy noticed, of the ladies were rather limited in dimensions; but what they lacked in quantity they made up for in style, all the dresses being provided with those "improvers" of late fashion in England. These made the skirts of the Portuguese damsels stick out all round, giving them a very funny appearance with their brown skins and bare feet!

It was well they coaled here, for while they were yet in sight of the huge cloud-cap't mountain above Santa Cruz, the wind that had favoured them so well up to now dropped to a dead calm; so, Captain Lennard, ordering the sails to be furled and the screw-propeller lowered, the vessel was able to proceed under steam across the equator, making almost as good time as when sailing before a good breeze—almost, but not quite, as she was a clipper under canvas.

They touched once more at the Cape of Good Hope, to fill up the coal they had expended in case of another emergency necessitating their steaming again; but, the wind being favourable when the *Greenock* got below the forties, she bowled along steadily before it under canvas, reaching Melbourne within sixty days.

Altogether, the voyage was uneventful except for one thing, and that was the persistent bullying of Mr Capstan the second-mate, who, whether from his relationship to Uncle Jack, his superior officer, or from some other cause, had apparently conceived such a dislike to Teddy that he tyrannised over him more than he seemed to think necessary either with little Maitland or Jones—although they suffered, too, at his hands!

Teddy would not complain, though, to the captain; and as for his Uncle Jack, he would have thought it dishonourable to breathe a word to him. He would rather have suffered the crudest torture the bully could inflict than that!

However, he and little Maitland matured their plans together, and coming to the conclusion that they could not very well have any satisfaction from Mr Capstan without telling tales, they determined to steal away from the ship when she got into harbour, and run away ashore up into the bush, Val Maitland retailing for Teddy's benefit the most wonderful stories anent gold-digging and bush-ranging—stories that cordially agreed with his own fancy.

Not long, therefore, after the *Greenock* had entered within Port Philip Heads and got up to Sandridge Pier, the two boys, mixing amongst the crowd of passengers landing, touters touting for various boarding-houses, and all the different sorts of people that throng round the newly-arrived at the colonial metropolis, especially at its harbour mouth, managed easily to get into the town unobserved, giving the slip most successfully to their ship and all its belongings.

"And what shall we do now?" asked Teddy, his companion, although smaller than himself, taking the lead, from being an older sailor and having been previously in Australia.

"Do! why, go into the bush, of course!" promptly answered the other.

"And how shall we get there?" next inquired Teddy cheerfully, wishing to start off that very moment for the golden land he had dreamt of.

"Why, by train," said Val.

"By train!" echoed Teddy in a voice of consternation, the idea was such a terrible come down to what he had imagined.

"Yes, by train; come along with me," repeated little Maitland, catching hold of his arm; and turning into Collins Street he soon made his way to the railway depôt and took a couple of tickets for Ballarat.

Chapter Eleven.

The Wreck.

"I say," began Val presently when the train was in motion.

"Well?" said Teddy rather grumpily.

He could not stomach the fact that here they were journeying along by the aid of an ordinary railway, just as they would have done in England.

When Val had suggested their going to the diggings he had imagined they would tramp thither through the bush, with their blankets and swag on their shoulders, as he had often read of men doing; and that they would end by picking up a big nugget of gold that would make all their fortunes!

The train disposed of all these dreams in a moment; for, how could they pick up nuggets along a line of "permanent way," as Jupp would have called it—a beaten track that thousands traversed every day by the aid of the potent iron-horse and a bucket of hot water?

It was scandalous that Val hadn't told him of the railroad!

It dispelled all the romance of the expedition at once, he thought grumpily. Despite all Mr Capstan's bullying, he had not run away from the ship for that; so he was not at all in a mood to have any conversation with such an unprincipled fellow as Val, who ought to have enlightened him before.

"Well?" he said again, seeing that young Maitland hesitated about proceeding, his grumpy tone acting as a sort of damper to his contemplated eloquence.

"I say, old fellow," then began Val again, making a fresh start and blurting out his question, "have you got any money?"

Teddy was all sympathy now.

A comrade in distress should never appeal to him in vain!

So he commenced searching his pockets.

"I ought to have some," he said. "Father gave me a five-pound note before I left home, and Uncle Jack when I was in London with him tipped me a sovereign, and I haven't spent or changed either for that matter; but, now I come to think of it, they're both in my chest in the cabin. I never thought of taking them out before we left the *Greenock*."

"That's precious unlucky," observed Val, searching his pockets too, and trying each vainly in turn. "I've only a couple of shillings left now after paying for the railway tickets. Whatever shall we do?"

"Oh, bother that!" replied Teddy sanguinely; "we sha'n't want any. The fellows I've read about who went to the diggings never had a halfpenny, but they always met with a friendly squatter or tumbled into luck in some way or other."

"That was in the old days," said Val in a forlorn way. "The squatters have all been cleared out, and there are only hotels and boarding-houses left, where they expect people to pay for what they have to eat."

"They're a stingy lot then, and quite unlike what I've read in books about the customs in Australia; but what can you expect when they have a railway!"

Teddy spoke in such a scornful manner of this sign of civilisation that he made Val laugh, raising his spirits again.

"All right, old chap!" said the little fellow. "I daresay we'll get along very well although we haven't any money to speak of with us. Two shillings, you know, is something; and no doubt it will keep us from starving till we come across luck."

Teddy cheerfully acquiesced in this hopeful view of things; and then the two, being alone in the carriage, chatted away merrily on all sorts of subjects until they arrived at their station, which a porter sang out the name of exactly in the same fashion as if they were at home.

This quite exasperated Teddy, who, when he got down and looked about him, opened his eyes with even greater wonder.

Surely this large town couldn't be Ballarat!

Why, that place ought to be only a collection of hastily-run-up wooden shanties, he thought, with perhaps one big store where they sold everything, provisions, and picks and shovels, with cradles for rocking the gold-dust out of the quartz and mud.

Where were the canvas tents of the diggers, and the claims, and all?

But, yes, Ballarat it was; although the only diggings were quarries worked by public mining companies with an immense mass of machinery that crushed the rock and sent streams of water through the refuse, using quicksilver to make an amalgam with—companies that were satisfied to get a grain of gold for every ton of quartz they excavated and pounded into powder, and realised a handsome dividend at that, where ordinary diggers wouldn't have had a chance of keeping themselves from starving.

He and little Maitland wandered about; and then, feeling hungry, exhausted all their capital in one meal, "burning their boats," like the old Athenians.

They would now have either to find something to do to get lodging or food, or else tramp it back to the ship.

They slept that night in the open air, under some scaffolding round a new building that was being run up on the outskirts of the town; and the next morning were wandering about again, feeling very miserable and wishing they were safely back on board the *Greenock*, it being just breakfast-time, when they were accosted by a stout, hairy sort of man, dressed in a species of undress uniform.

"Hullo, my young friends!" the man said, his voice being much pleasanter than his looks, "where do you hail from? I don't think I've ever seen you in Ballarat before."

"You wouldn't again if we could help it," replied Teddy so heartily that the hairy man laughed as jollily as might have been expected from his musical voice.

"Ah! I think I know who you are," he observed, eyeing them both critically.

"Well, you must be a conjuror if you do," answered little Maitland, who had a good deal of native impudence about him, "considering we haven't been twenty-four hours in Australia!"

"What say you to Maitland being your name and Vernon that of your companion, eh, my young cocksparrow?" said the man with a quizzical look. "Am I conjuror or not?"

The boys stared at each other in amazement.

"Well," exclaimed Teddy at length, "this is certainly the funniest country I have ever been in. The diggings that I've read about in print over and over again have all vanished into nothing, and here there are railways running through the bush, with people knowing who you are twenty thousand miles away from home. It is wonderful!"

"Not so very wonderful after all, Master Teddy Vernon," suggested the hairy man at this juncture. "I'm an inspector of police here, and we received a telegram last night which had been circulated in all directions from the chief office at Melbourne, saying that you two young gentlemen were missing from the ship *Greenock*, just arrived from England, and that any information about you would be gladly received and rewarded by Captain Lennard, the commander of the vessel."

"I'm very glad," said Teddy, interrupting any further remark the inspector might have made. "We came away suddenly because of something that occurred on board; and now I sha'n't be at all sorry to go back again, for we have no money or anything to eat. Besides, the place isn't a bit like what I expected—there!"

"Ah! you're hungry, my young friends, and that soon takes the pluck out of a body," observed the inspector kindly. "Come along with me and have some breakfast, after which I'll see you into the train for Melbourne."

"But we haven't got any money," said Teddy, looking at him frankly in the face.

"Never mind that," he replied jokingly. "I daresay I can put my hand on an odd sixpence or so, and this I've no doubt your captain will pay me back."

"That he will," cried Teddy and Val together in one breath; "besides, we've got money of our own on board the ship, only we forgot to bring it with us."

"And a very good job too," said the inspector laughing, "otherwise, you might not perhaps have been so glad to meet me this morning; but come on now, lads. Let us go into the

town to some restaurant, and then I will see you to the dépôt, if I can depend on your going back."

"That you can, sir," replied Val drily, "if you buy the tickets for us."

"Oh, I'll see about that," said the inspector; and so, under his escort, they went into the nearest restaurant and had a good meal, after which the inspector took tickets for them, seeing them into the railway-carriage. The worthy policeman must also have said something to the guard, for after he had given Teddy his name, at the lad's especial request, and wished them good-bye, some official or other came up and locked the door of the compartment, so that they could not have got out again if they had wished save by climbing through the window.

"He needn't have been alarmed at our giving him the slip," observed little Maitland. "I am only too glad to be sent back in any fashion, ignominious though it may be to be under charge of the police."

"So am I," said Teddy; "but the inspector is a nice fellow after all, and has behaved very well to us."

He had been even more thoughtful, however, than the boys imagined; for, on the train arriving once more at the Melbourne terminus, who should be there to meet them but Uncle Jack!

"Well, you're a nice pair of young scamps," was his exclamation when the door of the carriage was opened by another policeman, and they got out right in front of where he was standing. "What have you got to say for yourselves, eh, for taking leave in French fashion like that? Why, you ought to be keel-hauled both of you!"

But he saved them a long explanation by telling them that Jones, the other midshipman, having been knocked down with a marlinespike by the second-mate, Captain Lennard had both him and Mr Capstan brought before him, when, sifting the matter to the bottom, Jones had made a clean breast of the way in which he and the other youngsters had been bullied.

"And the upshot of the whole affair is," continued Uncle Jack, "Captain Lennard has dismissed Capstan from his ship, giving him such a discharge certificate that I don't think he'll get another second-mate's place in a hurry! As for you, my young scamps, I don't think the skipper will be very hard on you; but, Teddy, you ought to have told me of the treatment you three

poor beggars were receiving at that ruffian's hands all the voyage. Old Bill Summers, the boatswain, confirmed every word that Jones said, and was quite indignant about it."

"I didn't like to tell, you being my uncle and over Mr Capstan," said Teddy; "I thought it would be mean."

"It is never mean to complain of injustice," replied Uncle Jack gravely; "still, the matter now rests with the skipper."

Captain Lennard gave the boys a good talking to for running away, saying that it wasn't manly for young sailors to shirk their work in that way for any reason. However, considering all the circumstances of the case and the lesson they had learnt, that boys couldn't be absolutely independent of those in authority over them, he said that he had made up his mind to forgive them, telling them they might return to their duty.

The passengers having all landed and the ship cleared of her home cargo, she began immediately taking in wool for her return voyage, and in a few weeks' time set sail from the Heads for England—though *via* Cape Horn this time, as is generally the routine with vessels sailing to Australia when coming back to the Channel.

There were only two passengers on board, the captain and mate of a vessel that had been sold at Melbourne, she having only been navigated out by these officers for the purpose, and the vessel being unencumbered by emigrants the sailors had more room to move about. Teddy found it much pleasanter than on the passage out, as Captain Lennard was able to spare more time in teaching him his duty, a task which he was ably backed up in by Uncle Jack and Robins, the new second-mate, a smart young seaman whom the captain had promoted from the fo'c's'le to take Capstan's vacant place, and a wonderful improvement in every way to that bully.

After leaving Port Philip, they had a fair enough passage till they got about midway between New Zealand and the American continent, Captain Lennard taking a more northerly route than usual on account of its being the summer season in those latitudes, and the drift-ice coming up from the south in such quantities as to be dangerous if they had run down below the forties.

When the *Greenock* was in longitude somewhere about 150 West and latitude 39 South a fierce gale sprung up from the

north-east, right in their teeth, causing the lighter sails of the ship to be handed and the topgallants to be taken in.

At midnight on the same day, the wind having increased in force, the upper topsails were handed and the foresail reefed, the ship running under this reduced canvas, and steering east-south-east, the direction of the wind having shifted round more to the northward. The next evening, the wind veered to the westward, and was accompanied with such terrific squalls and high confused sea that Captain Lennard, who had thought at first he could weather out the storm under sail, determined to get up steam, and lowered the propeller so that the ship might lay-to more easily.

Later on in the afternoon, however, another shift of wind took place, the gale veering to sou'-sou'-west in a squall heavier than any of its predecessors; while a heavy sea, flooding the decks, broke through the hatchway and put out the engine fires.

Being a smart seaman, the captain had sail set again as soon as possible, hoisting reefed topsails and foresail to lift the vessel out of the trough of the following seas, in which she rolled from side to side like a whale in its death flurry.

All seemed going on well for a short time after this; and he and Uncle Jack thought they had weathered the worst of it, when the foresheet parted and the clew of the foresail, going through the lower foretopsail, split it in ribbons.

The barque was then brought to the wind on the port tack under the lower maintopsail, and she lay-to pretty well; but the wind kept on veering and beating with frequent squalls from sou'-sou'-west to west, so that at noon a strong gale prevailed again fiercer than before.

Teddy had not seen anything like this; but he wasn't a bit frightened, and he was as active as the oldest sailor in lending help to carry out the captain's orders, jumping here, there, and everywhere like a monkey.

The skipper was so pleased with his behaviour that he complimented him by telling Uncle Jack he was as good as his right hand!

Later on, the weather seemed calming down and all were very busy repairing damages; but, in the evening, a tremendous sea broke on board carrying away the bulwarks and chain-plates fore and aft on the port side, the accompanying violent gust of

wind jerking the maintopsail as if it had been tissue paper out of the ship.

Immediately after this, with the first lee roll, the foremast broke off almost flush with the deck and fell with a crash over the side, taking with it everything that stood but the lower main and mizzen masts, leaving the *Greenock* rolling a hopeless wreck on the waste of raging waters.

Chapter Twelve.

Easter Island.

The gale suddenly ceased during the night, but all hands remained on deck; for, the sea was still rolling mountains high and coming in occasionally over the broken bulwarks, causing Captain Lennard much anxiety about the boats, which, fortunately, the broken top hamper kept from being washed overboard.

In the morning it was quite calm again; but the poor old ship presented a piteous scene of desolation, with her broken sides, and her gay array of towering masts and spreading yards and spread of canvas all swept away.

Teddy could nearly have cried at the sorry sight; not reflecting that through the merciful care of a divine providence watching over all not a life had been lost.

With the daylight, Captain Lennard took a rapid review of their position.

He had caused a stout tarpaulin to be lashed over the engine-room hatch, thus preventing any more water from passing down into the hold there in any perceptible quantity; still, the carrying away of the bulwarks and chain-plates had strained the ship very much on the port side, and when the carpenter sounded the well at eight bells the ship was found to be leaking fast, having already a depth of two feet in her.

"Man the pumps!" cried the captain; when Uncle Jack lending a willing hand, the crew under his encouragement were soon working away steadily with a clink-clank, clink-clank, the water pouring out through the scuppers in a continuous stream.

However, on the well being sounded again presently, it was found to be flowing in equally steadily, having risen already six inches more in spite of all their pumping!

What was to be done?

The captain and Uncle Jack deliberated together, summoning the new third mate to assist their counsels; but, they could only arrive at one opinion.

The ship was sinking fast, and all hands knew it as well as they themselves; for, in addition to the damage done to the sides and bulwarks, the heavy propeller had aided the waves in wrenching away the rudder, which carried with it the greater portion of the stern-post.

"We must take to the boats," said Captain Lennard. "Thank God, they are all right, and haven't been washed away in the storm!"

Leaving the useless pumps, therefore, for it was of no avail fatiguing the men with the unnecessary exertion any longer, all the pumping in the world being idle to save the vessel, the hands were at once set to work clearing the boats and getting them over the side.

It was a ticklish job, the long-boat especially being very heavy, and there being no means, now they had lost their masts, of rigging a tackle aloft to hoist it off the chocks amidships.

Still, necessity teaches men alternatives in moments of great peril; so, now, knocking away the under fastenings of the boat by main force, the crew managed at last to get it free. Then, improvising rollers out of pieces of the broken topmast, they contrived by pulling and hauling and shoving, all working with a will together, to launch it over the side through the hole in the bulwarks.

The jolly-boat followed suit, an easier task; and then, the two being deemed sufficient to accommodate all on board, just sixty-one in number including the two passengers, Captain Lennard gave the order to provision them, telling the steward to bring out all the cabin stores for this purpose, there being now no further use for them on board the ship, and officers and men being entitled to share alike without distinction.

The captain himself, while this was being done, saw to the ship's log and other papers, taking also out of the cabin his best

chronometer and a chart or two, as well as a sextant and some mathematical instruments.

These preparations for departure, though, were abruptly cut short by a warning cry from Bill Summers, the boatswain.

"We'd better look sharp, sir," he called out to Uncle Jack, who was busily engaged superintending the stowage of the provisions in the two boats. "The water is arising rapidly, and is now nearly up to the 'tween-decks!"

Uncle Jack passed on the word to the captain, who instantly came up the companion.

Seeing the truth of the boatswain's statement from the deeper immersion of the ship since he had gone below, he at once ordered the men down into the boats, the passengers going first; then the foremast hands; and, lastly, the officers.

"Mr Althorp," said the captain, "you will take charge of the jolly-boat and shove off as soon as she's got her complement. I will command the long-boat myself."

"Aye, aye, sir," responded Uncle Jack, descending into the boat when she had as many in her as she could safely hold; when, shoving off from the ship's side and rowing a few strokes, the men lay on their oars, remaining some twenty yards off so as to be out of the whirlpool or eddy that would be formed when the vessel presently foundered.

The long-boat now received its quota of passengers, all descending into it and seating themselves on the thwarts and in the bottom so as not to be in the way of those rowing, Captain Lennard waiting till the last to get into her.

Just as he got in, however, he suddenly remembered that he had forgotten a compass, and hastily climbed back on board to get it.

"Look sharp, Cap'en!" shouted Bill Summers from the bow as the ship gave a quiver all over. "She's just about to founder."

The captain was quick enough, racing back to the companion and down the stairs in two bounds, where, although the cabin was half full of water, he contrived to wrench away the "tell-tale" compass that swung over the saloon-table; and he was on the poop again with it in an instant.

The instrument, however, was heavy, but he had hard work to carry it with both hands; and he managed to get to the side with it, when bending down handed it to Bill Summers, who stood up in the bow of the boat to receive it.

At that instant, the ship gave a violent lurch, and some one sang out to shove off; when, the oars being dropped in the water, the boat was impelled some yards from the side, leaving Captain Lennard still on board.

"What, men, abandon your captain!" Teddy cried, his voice quivering with emotion. "You cowards, row back at once!"

"We can't," sang out the same voice that had before ordered the men to shove off.

Who it was no one noticed in the general flurry, nor knew afterwards; but, while the men were hesitating which course to adopt, Teddy, without saying another word, plunged overboard and swam back to the sinking *Greenock*, having no difficulty in getting up the side now for it was almost flush with the water.

"Come on board, sir!" said he jokingly, touching his forehead with his finger, his cap having been washed off as he dived.

"My poor boy!" cried Captain Lennard, overcome with emotion at the gallant lad's devotion; "you have only sacrificed two lives instead of one! Why did you not stay in the boat?"

"Because," began Teddy; but ere he could complete the sentence there was a violent rush of air upwards from the hold, and a loud explosion, the decks having burst.

At the same time, the ship made a deep bend forwards.

Then, her bows rose high in the air above the waves as the stern sank with a gurgling moan; and, the next moment, Teddy and Captain Lennard were drawn below the surface with the vessel as she foundered!

Teddy was nearly suffocated; but, holding his breath bravely, as Jupp had taught him, and striking downwards with all his force, he presently got his head above water, inhaling the delicious air of heaven, which he thought would never more have entered his nostrils.

When he came to himself, he saw the captain's body floating face downwards amongst a lot of broken planks and other

debris of the wreck, by some fragment of which he must have been struck as the *Greenock* foundered.

To swim forwards and seize poor Captain Lennard, turning him face upwards again and supporting his head above the water, was the work of a moment only with Teddy; and then, holding on to a piece of broken spar, he awaited the coming up of the launch, which, now that all danger was over from the eddy rowed up to the scene, when he and the captain were lifted on board—all hands enthusiastic about the courageous action of the little hero, and none more so than Captain Lennard when he recovered his consciousness.

"You have saved my life!" he said. "Had you not been close by to turn me over when I rose to the surface I should have been drowned before the boat could have come up. I will never forget it!"

Nor did he, as Teddy's subsequent advancement showed; but, there was no time now for congratulation or passing compliments.

The peril of those preserved from the wreck was not yet over, for, they were thousands of miles away from land floating on the wide ocean!

Hailing the jolly-boat, Captain Lennard announced what he thought the proper course should be.

"The best place for us to make for now is Valparaiso," he said; "and if we steer to the east-nor'-east we ought to fetch it in three weeks or so under sail; that is, if our provisions hold out so long."

Uncle Jack approving, this course was adopted; and, day after day, the boats, setting their sails, which Bill Summers had not forgotten to place on board, made slow but steady progress towards the wished-for goal.

One morning, all were wakened up by the welcome cry of "Land ho!" from the look-out forwards in the bow of the long-boat, which kept a little ahead of the jolly-boat, although always reducing sail if she forged too much forward so as not to lose her.

A signal was made, therefore, telling the glad news to Uncle Jack and those with him; while the boat pressed onwards

towards the spot where the hazy outline of a mountain could be dimly seen in the distance.

"That is not the American continent," said Captain Lennard to the men, in order to allay any future disappointment that might be afterwards felt. "We are nearly a thousand miles off that yet. It must be Easter Island. That is the only land I know of hereabouts in the Pacific; and, although I have never visited the place myself, I have heard that the natives are friendly to strangers. At all events we'll pay them a call; it will be a break in our long journey!"

Bye and bye the boats approached the shore and all landed, when a lot of copper-coloured savages came down to the beach waving branches of trees in sign of welcome.

The islanders had not much to eat; but Captain Lennard, seeing that their provisions were well-nigh expended, determined to stop here, while sending on Uncle Jack with a small party to Valparaiso to charter some vessel to come and fetch them all, the boats being so crowded that misfortune might await them all if they continued the voyage in such small craft.

For months and months all awaited in constant expectation Uncle Jack's return; but, he came not, and they at length believed that he and those with him must have been lost in some hurricane that had sprung up off the Chilian coast, and so had never reached Valparaiso at all!

They had no fear of starvation, however, the islands abounding in poultry in a semi-wild state, which they had to hunt down for themselves; for the natives lent them no assistance. Indeed they were rather hostile after a time; although the Englishmen were too numerous for them to attack, especially as they were always on their guard against surprise.

In wandering over the island, which is only some thirty miles round, Teddy was surprised, like the others, by the numbers of stone obelisks, rudely carved into the semblance of human faces and statues, which could not possibly have been executed by the present inhabitants.

It is believed by geographers that Easter Island must have formed a portion of a vast Polynesian continent peopled by some kindred race to those that designed the colossal monuments of an extinct civilisation, now almost overgrown with vegetation, that are yet to be found as evidences of a past age amidst the forests of Central America.

One day, more than a year after Uncle Jack had left, and when they had almost given up all hope of ever seeing him again, or of being relieved from their island prison—the long-boat being dashed to pieces in the surf soon after he started—a schooner in full sail was discovered making for the island.

Presently, she came nearer and nearer.

Then she hove to, and a boat was seen to be lowered from her side, and shortly afterwards being pulled in to the shore.

A moment later, and Uncle Jack's well-known face could be seen in the stern-sheets, a glad hurrah being raised by the shipwrecked men at the sight of him.

Soon, Uncle Jack landed, and he had a long tale to tell of the jolly-boat losing her sail, and being tossed about on the ocean till picked up by an American whaler, which first took a cruise down the South Seas, there detaining him many weary months before landing him at Sandy Point, in the Straits of Magellan, from whence he got finally to Valparaiso after awaiting a passage for weeks.

Arrived here, however, he at once got in communication with the British consul, and chartered a schooner to go to Easter Island and fetch his comrades.

Uncle Jack, too, mentioned that he had written home to the owners of the *Greenock*, telling of her loss and the safety of all hands on their temporary island home; and he had also sent a letter to Endleigh, he said, narrating all about Master Teddy's adventures, and saying that he was safe and well.

Captain Lennard did not long delay the embarkation of his little band, who were glad enough to leave Easter Island; so, in a couple of weeks' time all landed safely in Valparaiso, where they luckily caught the outgoing mail steamer as they arrived, and started off to England, rejoicing in their timely rescue and preservation from peril amid all the dangers of the deep.

Chapter Thirteen.

At Home Again.

It was a bright August day at Endleigh.

There was a scent of new-mown hay in the air, and gangs of reapers were out in the fields getting in the harvest, the whirr of the threshing-machine, which the squire had lately brought down from London, making a hideous din in the meadows by the pond, where it had been set up; puffing and panting away as if its very existence were a trial, and scandalising the old-fashioned village folk—who did not believe in such new-fangled notions, and thought a judgment would come on those having to do with the machine, depriving, as it did, honest men who could wield the flail of a job!

In the garden of the vicarage, the warm sun seemed to incubate a dreamy stillness, the butterflies hardly taking the trouble to fly, and the very flowers hanging down their lazy heads; while the trees drooping their leaves, as if faint and exhausted with the heat.

Everything out of doors looked asleep, taking a mid-day siesta. Everything, that is, but the bees, which carried on their honey-gathering business as briskly as ever, utterly impervious to the warmth. Indeed, perhaps they got on all the better for it, probing the petals of the white lilies yet in bloom, and investigating the cavities of the foxglove and wonderful spider-trap of the Australian balsam, or else sweeping the golden dust off the discs of the gorgeous sunflowers, a regular mine of mellifluent wealth; a host of gnats and wasps and other idle insects buzzing round them all the time and pretending to be busy too, but really doing nothing at all!

The heat-laden atmosphere was so still that it had that oily sort of haze that distinguishes the mirage in the East, when the air appears composed of little waving lines wavering to and fro that dazzle your eyes with their almost-imperceptible motion as you look at them; and the silence was unbroken save by the chuck-chuck-chuck of some meddlesome blackbird in the shrubbery annoying the sparrows in their nap, and the answering click-clink-tweedle-deedle-dum-tum-tweedle-um of the yellow-hammer, telling as plainly as the little songster could tell that he at all events was wide awake, while, in the far distance, there could be heard the coo of ring-doves and the melancholy lament of the cuckoo investigating the hedgerows in quest of other birds' nests wherein to lay its solitary egg, and finding itself forestalled at every turn!

But if everything was so quiet without, such was not the case indoors at the vicarage.

A telegram had been received from Uncle Jack, saying that he and Teddy, having reached London in safety, would be down by the afternoon train; so, all in the house were in a state of wild excitement at meeting again those they had thought lost for ever.

Even the vicar was roused out of his usual placidity, although Uncle Jack's letter from Valparaiso had told all about the wonderful escape of the survivors of the *Greenock*; while, as for Miss Conny, who was now a perfectly grown-up young lady of eighteen, all her sedateness was gone for the moment and she was every bit as wild as the rest.

"Dear me, I'm sure the afternoon will never come!" exclaimed Cissy, walking to the window after arranging and re-arranging the flowers in the vases on the little table in the centre of the drawing-room and on the mantel-piece for about the one-and-twentieth time. "It's the longest day I ever knew."

"Don't be so impatient, dear," said Conny, trying to appear cool and tranquil as usual, but failing utterly in the attempt as she followed Cissy to the window and looked out over the lawn; "the time will soon pass by if you'll only try and think of something else but the hour for the train to come in."

"You're a fine counsellor," cried Cissy laughing, as she watched Conny's hands nervously twisting within each other. "Why, you are as bad as I am, and can't keep still a moment! Only Liz is calm—as if nothing had happened or was going to happen. I declare I could bang her, as Teddy used to say, for sitting there in the corner reading that heavy-looking book. I believe it must be a treatise on metaphysics or something of that sort."

"Mistaken for once, Miss Ciss," said the student, looking up with a smile. "It's a volume of travels telling all about the Pacific Ocean and Easter Island, where Teddy and Uncle Jack stopped so long with the natives; so, it is very interesting."

"Well, I'd rather for my part wait and hear about the place from our own travellers," rejoined Cissy impatiently. "I do wish they would come! I think I will go and see how Molly is getting on with the dinner. I'm sure she'll be late if somebody doesn't look after her."

"You had better leave her alone, Cissy," remonstrated Conny. "Molly, you know, doesn't like being interfered with; and, besides, it is very early yet, for they can't be here before three o'clock at the earliest."

"Oh, she won't mind me, Con," replied Cissy as she whisked out of the room, gaily singing now, the idea of having an object or doing something banishing her ennui; "Molly and I are the best of friends."

However, on entering the cook's domain Cissy found the old servant the reverse of amiable, for her face was red and hot with basting a little sucking-pig that was slowly revolving on the spit before a glowing fire that seemed to send out all the more heat from the fact of its being August, as if in rivalry of the sun without.

"Well, how are you getting on?" asked Cissy cheerfully, the sight of the little roasting piggy which Molly had selected for the repast that was to welcome Teddy, with some dim association of the fatted calf that was killed on the return of the prodigal son, making her feel more assured that the time was speeding on, and that the expected ones would arrive soon.

But, Molly was not amenable to friendly overtures at the moment.

"Excuse me, miss, I don't want to be bothered now," she replied, turning her perspiring countenance round an instant from her task and then instantly resuming it again and pouring a ladleful of gravy over the blistering crackling of her charge. "There, now—you almost made me burn it by interrupting me!"

"I'm very sorry, I'm sure, Molly," said Cissy apologetically; and seeing that her room was preferred to her company, she went out into the kitchen-garden to seek solace for her listlessness there.

It was a vain task, though.

The bees were still busily engaged hovering from flower to flower and mixing up in their pouches the different sorts of sweet flavours they extracted with their mandibles from the scabius, whose many-hued blossoms of brown, and olive, and pink, and creamy-white, scented one especial patch near the greenhouse. This corner the industrious little insects made the headquarters of their honey campaign, sallying out from thence to taste a sweet-pea or scarlet-runner and giving a passing kiss to a gaudy fuchsia, who wore a red coat and blue corporation sort of waistcoat, as they went homeward to their hive.

On the ground below quite a crowd of sparrows were taking baths in turn in a flat earthenware pan which was always kept

filled with water for their particular delectation; and the butterflies, too, waking up, were poising themselves in graceful attitudes on the nasturtiums that twined over the gooseberry bushes, which were running a race with the broad-leaved pumpkins and vegetable marrow plants to see who would first clamber over the wall, the red tomatoes laughing through the greenery at the fun.

But there was little amusement for Cissy in all this at such a period of expectancy, when her pulses throbbed with excitement; so, she turned back towards the house with a yawn, uttering her longing wish aloud, "Why can't Teddy come?"

It being summer time, all the doors and windows were wide open to let in all the air possible, and as she retraced her steps slowly and disconsolately from the bottom of the garden at the back she heard a noise in front like the sound of wheels in the lane.

To dart through the side gate instead of returning by way of the kitchen was the work of a moment; and she reached the front of the house almost as soon as Conny and Liz, who had only to step out on to the smooth turf from the low French windows of the drawing-room.

It was only a false alarm, though, Doctor Jolly having driven up from visiting a patient to know when the travellers were expected.

"By the three o'clock train, eh?" he said on being told; then looking at his watch he added: "Why, it's close on two now. Any of you going down to the station to meet them?"

"Yes," answered Miss Conny in her prim way, "I was thinking of taking the children, if you do not consider it too warm to venture out in the heat of the sun? Poor papa is not so well to-day and unable to walk so far."

"Pooh, pooh!" ejaculated the doctor, with his hearty laugh. "Call this fine day too warm; you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You need not any of you walk. Go and put on your bonnets, and tell the vicar, and I'll cram you all into my old shanderadan and drive you down."

The Reverend Mr Vernon, however, besides suffering from one of his usual nervous headaches, which always came on when he was excited by anything as he was now, wished to be alone on

first meeting with his lost son again, so that none might witness his emotion, being a particularly shy man amongst strangers; so, although he came out of his study on hearing Doctor Jolly's voice he begged him to excuse his going, while accepting his kind offer for the girls—who were ready in less than no time, Miss Conny losing her primness in her anxiety not to keep the doctor waiting, and the generally slow Liz being for once quick in her movements.

In another minute they were all packed within the hybrid vehicle, half gig, half wagonette, which the doctor only used on state occasions, and must have brought out this afternoon with the preconceived idea of its being specially wanted.

"This *is* jolly!" exclaimed Cissy as they all drove off gaily down the sleepy lane, passing neither man nor beast on their way. "You are very good to us, doctor!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Miss Cissy," laughed he; "you're getting extremely familiar to address me like that. Jolly, indeed! why, that's my name, ho, ho!"

"I—I didn't think," stammered poor Cissy rather abashed, blushing furiously, while Conny took advantage of the opportunity to point out to her the evil effects of using slang words; but the little lecture of the elder sister was soon joked away by the doctor, and they arrived at the station in the best of spirits.

Here they met with a wonderful surprise.

Some one who must have heard the news somehow or other of Teddy's return home had decorated the front of the old waiting-room with evergreens and sunflowers; and a sort of triumphal arch also being erected on the arrival platform of the same floral pattern.

Who could have done it?

Why, no less a person than Jupp, whose black beard seemed all the blacker, surrounding his good-humoured face, as he came out of the office with Mary on his arm, and a young Master Jupp and another little Mary toddling behind them—the whilom porter no longer dressed in grimy velveteens, but in a smart black frock-coat, his Sunday best, while his wife was equally spruce.

"I know it's ag'in the rules, miss," he explained to Conny; "but I see the telegram as said Master Teddy'd be here this artemnoon,

God bless him, and I'm thankful, that I am, he's restored safe and sound from the bottom of the sea and Davy Jones's Locker, as we all on us thought. So says I to Grigson, my old mate as was, who's in charge here now, and we detarmined as how we'd make a kind of show like to welcome of him home."

"You're a right-down brick, Jupp!" said Doctor Jolly, shaking him by the hand, while Mary kissed her former nurse children all round; and, while they were all exchanging congratulations, up came the train rumbling and whistling and panting and puffing into the station, the engine bearing a Union Jack tied to the funnel, for Jupp's interest in two of the special passengers being brought to Endleigh was well-known on the line.

Hardly had the train come to a standstill than out jumped Teddy, a trifle taller and broader across the shoulders as might have been expected from his two years of absence, but the same open-faced boy with the curly brown hair and blue eyes that all remembered so well.

What a meeting it was, to be sure, and how he hugged his sisters and Dr Jolly and Jupp and Mary all round—Uncle Jack almost being unnoticed for the moment, although he did not appear to mind it, looking on with a sympathetic grin of delight at the general joy expressed in every countenance present!

The doctor's "shanderadan" had a full cargo back to the vicarage, everybody talking to everybody all at once and none being able to finish a complete sentence—little Cissy keeping tight hold of Teddy's arm the while as if fearful of losing him again and thinking it might be all a dream.

When they got to the house Teddy was through the gate and across the lawn in two bounds, tapping at the door of the study before his father knew that he had come.

Like another father, the vicar was overcome with glad emotion, clasping him in his arms and embracing him, weeping as he cried in a broken voice:

"This, my son, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"

Only a word more.

The terrible experiences Teddy had had, and the sense of discipline inculcated in him during his short training at sea, made such a change in his character that henceforth he lost his

former justly-earned titles, being never more called either "pickle" or "scapegrace."

He has not, however, abandoned the profession he originally adopted, in spite of its many perils and dangers, and the fact that a sailor's life is not altogether of that rose-coloured nature which story-writers usually make out.

No, he still sails under his old captain in the same line, and voyages backwards and forwards between Melbourne and London with praiseworthy punctuality, in the new ship Captain Lennard commands in place of the old *Greenock*. The vessel, too, is a regular clipper in her way, beating everything that tries to compete with her, whether outwards or inwards bound.

Teddy looks forward some day to taking his skipper's place when he retires from active life afloat, and following the example of Uncle Jack, who is already a captain too in his own right; for he is as steady and trustworthy now as he was formerly impetuous and headstrong.

But, mind you, he has lost none of his pluck or fearless spirit, and is the same genial, good-tempered, and happy-dispositioned boy he was in earliest childhood—knowing now the difference between true courage and mere bravado, and the value of obedience to those in authority over him.

As for Miss Conny, in spite of her ordinary sedateness of demeanour and constant asseveration that she would only marry a clergyman like her father, she is, to use Teddy's expressive diction, "spliced to a sodger," having become engaged some time since to a gallant captain in a marching regiment that was quartered for a while at Bigton, within easy access of Endleigh.

Cissy and Liz are both growing up nice girls; while the vicar is still hale and hearty, giving his parishioners the benefit every Sunday of a "thirdly" and sometimes "fourthly, brethren," in addition to the first and second divisions of his sermon; and never omitting his favourite "lastly" with "a word in conclusion" to wind up with.

Doctor Jolly, to complete our list of characters, is yet to the fore with his catching laugh, as "jolly" as ever; and, Jupp and Mary have likewise been so tenderly dealt with by time that they hardly look a day older than on that memorable occasion when Master Teddy introduced himself to public notice.

Don't you remember?

Why, when he casually mentioned to the porter and reader alike, and all whom it might concern, in the most matter-of-fact way in the world, that he wanted to "do dan'ma!"

The End.
